

---

This is a reproduction of a library book that was digitized by Google as part of an ongoing effort to preserve the information in books and make it universally accessible.

Google™ books

<http://books.google.com>



# The Grace of Orders

N. B. WINSTON

University of Virginia Library

PS3340.W68 G7 1901

ALD

The grace of orders / by N.B.



NX 001 007 746

Digitized by Google

R.W.

**LIBRARY OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA**



**FROM THE BOOKS OF  
ROBERTA WELLFORD**

Roberta Weefer

---



THE  
GRACE OF ORDERS



BY  
N. B. WINSTON

THE  
**Abbey Press**

PUBLISHERS

114

FIFTH AVENUE

London

NEW YORK

Montreal

PS  
3340  
WG8G7  
1901  
Copy 1

Copyright, 1901,  
by  
THE  
**Abbey Press**

# THE GRACE OF ORDERS.

## CHAPTER I.

“CONSIDERING how extravagant in many ways people are nowadays, it seems strange that most of them should be so economical of time!”

The speaker was Mrs. Walworth, the keeper of a Plantersville boarding-house, who, watering-pot in hand, was ministering to a bed of flowers growing beneath her front parlor windows. It was a morning in June, a radiant, beautiful morning. Breakfast at Mrs. Walworth's was already over; and Dr. Hogan, her favorite boarder, was seated upon the front porch gathering what news he could from the Plantersville “Times.” At Mrs. Walworth's remark the Doctor looked over the top of his paper replying:

“For most people it seems useless to struggle against the current.” Then the Doctor went on reading his paper, and Mrs. Walworth, though her breakfast dishes had not yet been cleared away, continued her peaceful pastime, determined to take no headlong pace in regard to any domestic care. The remark which Mrs. Walworth had made, and to which the Doctor had given his rather impersonal reply, was occasioned by the exit from the boarding-house of a



young man, strenuous in appearance and thin, whose quick step showed plainly that the existence which the Doctor and Mrs. Walworth pursued contentedly had no fascination for him. Beneath the same Southern skies David Alexander's ancestors had lived satisfied to be influenced by the Indian-summer languor of their native air. With him everything was different, for the ambition of achievement possessed him, and work was the prime object of his existence.

An old Virginia town was Plantersville, built upon many hills with a pleasant river flowing at their base, its pride being that it was the custodian of many historical traditions. Certain it was that since Colonial days the town had played no insignificant part in those forces which have shaped the common life of this country. There one was constantly reminded that the Old Dominion has been the mother of great spirits. The Old Dominion! There is something melting and delicate about the phrase that draws one strangely. If to-day many of its lands are but poorly cultivated and the old homesteads fallen into decay, the name has yet a melody that charms one with a vague suggestion of gentle landscapes, of peaceful waters, of mild blue mountains and of a happy past.

None of these things, however, were in Alexander's mind as he walked steadily down the quiet streets of Plantersville. It was not upon the fascinating suggestiveness of the place that his imagination had long dwelt; he looked upon it as a working center, where the material he needed was to be found. For several years he had been engaged upon an historical work,

and in the Plantersville Town Library were most of the documents needful to his research. The young man exhibited much strength of character in pursuing his purpose so long with unflagging faith and energy, and had it not been that his strength was equalled by certain strange limitations, there is no doubt that David Alexander would have gone very far indeed along the line of his chosen profession.

One day, talking of Alexander with his friend, Mrs. Winifred Webb, Dr. Hogan said:

“‘Like the Puritans, he lives as ever in his great task-master’s eye.’” Mrs. Webb, whose apt remarks always pleased the Doctor, replied:

“Recently I read of a man who labored night and day carving and polishing a bit of ivory so that it might look like a grain of rice. At the end of nine years he deemed his work well-nigh perfect. A hungry hen then swallowed his masterpiece. The hen made no complaint, nor did the rest of the world.”

The Doctor smiled and went on to say very warmly what he thought of hammering the life out of things, expressing so decided a preference for any kind of fiery chaos that Mrs. Webb diverted his thought only after the exercise of much adroitness, determining at the same time to keep a sharper look-out in the future upon her conversation with the Doctor.

Dr. Hogan, like David Alexander, frequented the Plantersville Town Library for interests of his own, and on this same morning he came upon Agnes Carlton there. She stood near an open window, gazing intently out. The sight upon which Agnes’s eye rested

was pleasant to her beyond expression. Everywhere could be seen and felt the freshness of early summer, and the old town, amid its many hills, sloping to the river, while the river, guarded sacredly on both shores by green fields which every year rendered bountiful harvests, was marching quietly onward to the sea.

"What a day! I could spend the whole of it under the trees, and then go to bed complaining that I could find no more hours in which to indulge my fancies."

"A dreamer!" said the Doctor, but he smiled approvingly upon Agnes, for he also admired the wide, free overlook of landscape which inspired the girl's words.

"Come!" said she, "I am sure, Doctor, that you like Ossian. I even suspect that twilight and melancholy music induce reverie with you."

"You mistake me for a poet," he replied, smiling. "I am only an antiquary."

"An antiquary believes naturally in nocturnal apparitions, I am quite sure," she continued, "and the murmur of the wind and the moaning of the sea go hand in hand with them."

"Possibly an antiquary does lean toward certain superstitions," replied the Doctor, amused at the turn Agnes had given the conversation.

"And doubtless," said Agnes, "whatever may be our professions, we all have some little personal fetish."

"As in the case of the business man," continued the Doctor, "who, while hurrying to his office, sees a pin,

and stooping gravely, picks it up, runs it into the lapel of his coat, and then rushes on, saying to himself:

‘See a pin and pick it up.  
All the day you’ll have good luck.’”

“Such a frivolous antiquary I never suspected,” laughingly protested Agnes.

“Put it down to old age,” said the Doctor, “the best part of which is its sense of proportion. The cloud-land of youth is very changeful, but in that quiet atmosphere where I dwell we estimate things at their true value. We see that at times even frivolity plays a not unimportant part.”

As Agnes and the Doctor talked together in subdued tones, Agnes’s gaze wandered often from the face of her companion to the out-door scene which had so attracted her attention. The Doctor, being a man of social nature who did not care for general society, had within himself many resources which one in closer touch with others often lacks. He delighted to observe people and to draw his own inference as to what their lives were. As he watched Agnes now, something about her gave him the impression of courage and beauty of spirit; and yet had she been called upon to speak for herself, doubtless she would have said that most of her years, which were twenty-eight, had been spent in planning things as far as possible for her own pleasure. However this may have been, there are certain natures which no amount of consideration from self or from the world can materially spoil or render entirely selfish. These souls seem born

to reach the highest purposes, and by whatever way they walk, when the end is reached and the veil raised, it is clearly seen that all along they have been guided and sustained by a divine tenderness and love. Such thoughts came to the Doctor, confirming him in the belief that by following Pope's injunction of making mankind a study, the dulness of any kind of a life may be substantially relieved.

The Town Library of Plantersville was a peculiar institution. Full of the echoes of the past, it had been for several generations the intellectual center of the old historic town. Within the rooms were stored many interesting relics; its walls were hung with portraits of noted personages, and books old and rare, many of them to be found nowhere else in America, were gathered together there, piled high in alcoves, on tables, and often on the floor, as convenience directed. The modern library system had not then been introduced into Plantersville, and people like the Doctor, who preferred the quaint and the old, were quite satisfied with the library as it was. Sometimes, of course, it was difficult to find just what one sought, as Agnes Carlton discovered, when, having finished her talk with the Doctor, she started upon a quest for certain desired information. Still, there the books were, ready to every man's hand, their leaves to be turned at his pleasure, and to be on such familiar terms with the great minds of the world was certainly no slight matter. As Agnes sought the books she needed she could but notice the many queer types of humanity gathered about the long tables in the library. Some

old, forlorn and evidently friendless persons came there from day to day to search in volumes that would have made Quintilian stare. What genuine seekers after truth many of them seemed! Agnes's interest was aroused irresistibly, and instead of consulting the books she had sought, she sat gazing intently at the various patrons of the library, wondering what, after all, was the meaning of this marvelous thirst for knowledge implanted so strongly in the whole human race, and what in time was to be the outcome of so much seeking to know and understand. With such thoughts in her mind she recalled that time in her own life when she, too, like all inquiring souls, had sought in literature the key to the universe, thinking that the reading of some particular book, or set of books, would admit her to those pinnacles of thought whence all things human and divine may be easily discernible. But Agnes had learned that no reader of them ever finds that books open any such door as he expects. She knew that all those diligent souls about her were destined to be disappointed as she had been. Still, she could not escape from the fascination of the subject. Books had always made a large part of the warp and woof of her being, so much so that she had even acknowledged in herself for a long time an irresistible tendency to be a writer of them. Possibly, she mused, it might be left for her to find the keys to the human heart, and so to unlock the most sacred chamber of the universe. While thus engaged her eye was attracted by two portraits hanging near her, one of Captain John Smith and the other of the Indian maiden

who at the risk of her own life had saved his. Serenely from their places upon opposite walls the intrepid soldier and the dusky maid looked down upon the scene, and possibly, Agnes reflected, could they have spoken out of their own hardy and adventurous experiences, they might have answered some of those questions which no books have yet answered.

Agnes did not remain long with her own musings before she realized that this was one of the days when all serious work was impossible to her. It was useless, she saw, to think further of the kind of reading she had come to the library to do; if she read at all now it must be—according to Dr. Johnson's counsel—a book she felt a wish and curiosity to read, which injunction had never seemed wiser to her than on this beautiful day and in the mood induced by it. The impulses of Agnes's nature tended at all times to the living of life intensely. Sometimes these impulses found satisfaction in reflection, in meditation; at other times, as at present, they demanded a freer, a more joyous mode of expression, and then nothing less than life in the open, amid abundant sunshine and air, sufficed for her. Yielding to her mood Agnes pushed aside the books she had gathered about her, and taking up her gloves and parasol passed quietly from the library into a beautiful square surrounding the building.

Further back than living man could remember this square had been a joy and pride to the citizens of Plantersville, though it is said that much less than a hundred years ago it was only a gravelly hillside furrowed with gulleys. Now it had become for many

as "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land," beautiful indeed with leafy slopes, broad walks, and statues. In the midst stood the old library as simply grand as an ancient temple. In this square two men, comparatively young, stood talking together. Evidently they had been speaking of their work, for one of them, David Alexander, said:

"But to be master of my own mind is what I find the most difficult thing."

"Possibly you arrange things too carefully; you take too much thought for the morrow," suggested the other, Archibald Gordon, a man of very winning qualities, yet appearing neither prosperous nor happy.

"But how can a sincere man act differently?" asked Alexander.

"It has been said," replied Gordon, "that he who lives entirely without folly is hardly as wise as he thinks himself." Merely a dreamer, as people said, Archibald Gordon had that vision of larger knowledge by which the imagination is nourished and enriched, therefore it was natural that he should see further than a man like David Alexander, who relied mainly upon the measuring-rod for his information. Following an exact plan Alexander had left no place for humor in his ordering of things, and his constant insistence upon the stern realities and duties of life often wearied such a mind as Archibald Gordon's. And yet Alexander's persistency was so great that Gordon was forced to render him a certain admiration, which, however, Alexander could well have dispensed with, feeling himself, as he did, vastly the superior man of the



two. Alexander's attitude toward him was explained by something in Gordon's general appearance indicating that the nervous system had been unnaturally heightened and intensified by an irregular life. With a brilliant intellect and a warm heart his will had not proved itself strong enough for the battle of life.

As the two men stood together Agnes Carlton came upon them, and was gladly greeted by both.

"So, here you are!" said Gordon, in his winning, spontaneous manner, "having ground away a few hours, I suppose, over the chosen volume."

"Not at all," she replied. "For the day, I have cast aside my literary conscience, and am now ready to take to my heart anything, provided it brings me delight."

"That is a finality, I suppose," said Alexander, ever anxious to reduce life to a mathematical quantity and extract the square-root therefrom.

"Possibly I should be better off if it were," she answered, "since I begin to doubt seriously if anything is to be accomplished by hurling myself against the invincible ignorance of the world. This is such a tough old world," she continued laughingly, "that it seems to survive every kind of shock."

"Still, the man who works and exacts something of himself alone succeeds," protested Alexander, who felt that Agnes Carlton possessed splendid possibilities, which, directed by such accuracy and purpose as his own, might become a great realization.

"Though this is such a work-a-day world," said Gordon, "it is none the less true that

'A dreamer lives forever,  
And a toiler dies in a day.'

Alexander's eyes were blinded so that he could not see how duty can be transformed into delight; but Gordon understood, reprehensible as much of his life had been, and the whirl and throbbings of an unbridled imagination he comprehended fully, as well as that exceeding vivid sense of life which flowed through Agnes Carlton like a stream of veritable fire.

Later, when Gordon had left them, Alexander, looking earnestly and anxiously at Agnes, said:

"It pains me to hear you speak as you did a while ago."

"But it may be," she answered, "that we are deceiving ourselves—that everything is a mistake."

"Not," said he, "if you will only follow my lead."

"But," she replied, "I hate to be tied down; to go in harness is the greatest annoyance to me. I like to form my own uninspired opinions in my own way, no matter how widely they may differ from the conventional decisions of others."

"I am sure it is better," he said, "that a naturally imaginative and adventurous spirit like yours should bow before the circumstances of a confined and quiet life; it is what such a spirit needs to make it unfold itself." The sunlight dripping through the thick branches of the overhanging trees, the very deliciousness of the day filled Agnes's senses and drove her to speak.

"I will tell you," she said, "how I feel. On a bright day like this, when the trees are blooming, when

everything is bursting into life and beauty, I feel the impulse to do some great thing—to write out my aim and purpose in the world. And yet, when I set myself the task, shut within close walls, the impulse dies, and I become silent as death.”

“But after marriage,” said he, “all of this will end. Then our work will be ultimate—our conjoined lives will embrace everything, and there will no longer be for us unfulfilled desires on which to base dissatisfaction.”

“That all sounds very well and simple,” she answered, “but I fear you do not fully understand. The matter, so far as a man is concerned, may end there, but in the case of a woman it seems to me uncertain. The problem of her personality enters so largely into the question; just how far that is to be affected by her relationship with the man; whether the demands of that relationship are to become the rival of her art, and so silence in her forever the mystic voices which call so strongly to her at times.”

“I am quite certain,” he replied, “that all of these questions and doubts will be happily answered and settled for you by the experience of marriage itself.”

“I am inclined to think,” said Agnes, “that either the artist or the woman must in time give way—that that alone will settle the matter.”

“No, not at all,” he replied with determination. “We both seek the same thing—distinction as authors. You tell me that you have no absorbing love for me, but consent to marry me because I have persuaded you I can direct your powers wisely. That you consent to

be my wife and also consent to my literary guardianship are sufficient for me at present. Trust the future to me. I shall know how to make you happy as a wife and successful as a writer."

Never before had Alexander made so bold a declaration to Agnes, and his audacity and want of insight almost staggered her. Was it possible that he knew nothing of the demands either of art or of marriage? Still, she had bound herself to him, after quiet consideration, and for good reasons, she believed, and she was determined to abide by her decision. But her doubts had become very grave, for hers was a world continually dissolving and recombining, while his evidently corresponded to the most formal descriptions. Each day she was forced to ask herself again and again: could tastes and minds differing so widely as hers and Alexander's be brought into harmony, so that in time they might find themselves unconsciously treading with serene footsteps the same paths? No definite answer had yet been given to her. According to the poverty or riches of their respective natures was the interpretation of their lives yet to come. At present the force of circumstances held them in bondage one to the other, and the end was lost in the mists of the future.

## CHAPTER II.

MANY waters cannot quench genius, neither can the floods drown it. Unquestionably true as this is, there still remains the fact that the ordinary man often outstrips the gifted one in the race of every-day life. Such certainly was true in the case of Archibald Gordon, whose innate modesty and pride had kept his personality much in the background. A little figure, with dreamy eyes, Gordon seemed to combine much in his slight person. The physical trait which one noticed most readily in him was a large, full brow, contrasting strangely with a lower face insufficiently developed. Every one recognized Gordon as a brilliant student, but fatally irregular and desultory in his method of work. And he had always been the same. When a boy at school he had left everything to chance, rarely touching his lessons till the last moment, and so became the terror of his teachers, because other boys of less brilliant qualities imitated him with fatal results. It was not strange that out of such a schooling had come a man who was mainly a dreamer and a wanderer.

On both sides Archibald Gordon was descended from Colonial Virginia families, families once wealthy and powerful, owning enormous tracts of land to the south of Plantersville and exercising almost princely rights within the borders of the same. Before the birth

of Archibald, his father had lost not only his own fortune, but that of his wife, and the family had become acquainted with such straightened means as it had never known before. Amid the prostration, distress and ruin of the time following the Civil War there had occurred no chance of bettering the fortunes of the Gordons. One by one the members of this family had passed away, disappointed and embittered, three alone remaining now of a large number—Archibald, his mother, and an invalid sister. For these three, Archibald, with his poor capacity for sustained work, was the bread-winner. At one time he had been a country school-teacher, but finding this position too galling he had given it up after a year, had wandered South and taught two years in Mississippi; then, grown feverish with a homesickness he could not quell, he had returned to Virginia and for a time was a private tutor in one of the lower counties. The profession of teaching brought to Gordon only disappointment and pain; he had none of the requisites. Finally, in desperation, with only a few dollars in his pocket, he fled from his uncongenial surroundings and joined his mother and sister in Plantersville, determined to trust in the future to his pen for a livelihood. The struggle had been fiercer, if possible, than in the days when the poet masqueraded as the schoolmaster; still Gordon felt that he had gained one great advantage—he was free, free to live his own life and do his work in his own way; and—as he told himself at times—free also to starve, if need be. Gordon knew that he must content himself with poverty and find his reward in being a reader, a writer,

and above all a poet; for he understood enough of his own complex nature to feel sure that he could never be made to fit into any of the well-paid places which the world has to offer.

While slight in figure, Gordon's personality was distinctly impressive. Active and graceful in movement, he held himself erect, and though looking at the world through very sad eyes of his own, he always turned to its gaze a face expressive of peculiar sweetness and refinement—a face which at times became luminous as he caught sudden glimpses into the heart of the things about him. Undoubtedly, people felt, this man had the brain of the enthusiast, of the poet, and yet his simplicity was that of a little child. As might have been expected he lived much alone, appearing in the world mostly as a solitary figure; causing those who did not know him to remark upon his imperious bearing. Yet those who went out of their way to make acquaintance with him found him kind and amiable. And so it was, while he did not mingle much with people, nearly every one liked him and many loved him. Oftener silent than talkative, Gordon had impressed his world with two things: his keen sense of humor which could lighten up even his darkest hours, and the sensitiveness of his own heart which could respond with passionate intensity to the needs of a wounded bird or a forsaken child. While recognizing these qualities, his intimate friends still saw that he took the way he did because of a fitful and melancholy tendency which he was unable to shake off. With emotions and passions exceptional, abnormal, it may be, Gordon had been an

easy prey to intemperance. The privation and uncertainty of his life since childhood had but increased the peril of the situation, with the result that he was already in large measure a shattered victim, for he belonged to that class whose temperaments command their wills.

Archibald Gordon's chief mental deficiency was that he had no idea of the general relation of things. To affirm to him that conduct and creativeness had a vital connection with one another was to confuse his understanding of facts. He had never been able to perceive that the artist is conditioned on the man. The beautiful appealed to him and affected him purely for its own sake, without reference to anything beyond or beneath the immediate impression produced. In pursuit of his desultory literary work Gordon spent much of his time in the Plantersville Library; in fact the past few years had been so largely passed there, interrupted only by spells of intemperance, that he had come to look upon the place as his natural home. For days at a time he would sit brooding over some book, sadness and dejection expressed in every line of face and figure. Then again a fever of work seemed to possess him, and, driven as by furies, he would pour forth the intensity of his spirit, sometimes in poetry, but oftener in poorly paid reviews and literary articles to which he had committed himself. It was at such times as these that Gordon gave indication of a wonderful imagination, and often he showed himself capable of being truly creative and masterful. Unfortunately these times proved to be but flashes of light against a dark background, and so



the greater part of his writing was of slight value, and privation and uncertainty continued to mark his career.

The East End of Plantersville, where the old library is situated, was many years ago the fashionable quarter of the town, and as such was expected by the people of that day to remain. However, the destiny of residential districts is proverbially blind, and the plans of many a rich and aristocratic family in Plantersville had been rudely shattered by the sudden rise and growth of a more favored quarter in the West End. So the East End, including the business portion of the town, lost caste as a fashionable residence, though it did not entirely lose its grand air, for there are still to be found in that part many houses whose beauty and dignity put to shame some of the bizarre and tasteless creations of the more favored district. In this old part of the town, but a short distance from the library, there is situated a plain, broad house of brick, noted in the past as the home of one of Plantersville's most distinguished citizens, but occupied at the time of which we write by Mrs. Winifred Webb. The neighborhood in which this house is located is very like the charming old "gross-mutter" of whom Heine sang, every fold of whose flowered gown is replete with pretty memories as she dozes in the chimney-corner; still, the quiet reigning there to-day is so supreme that the newcomer looks upon it as monotonous and uninteresting. But Mrs. Webb would have lived in no other part of Plantersville even had she possessed the means of doing so, which, however, she did not; and by sheer force of her

personality she had attracted to her house the most interesting people in the town.

Despite the solitariness of heart with which Archibald Gordon was passing on his way through life, there were times when his soul cried out for sympathy, for reciprocity of thought; when he longed to be understood with the understanding which a true and deep love alone can give. In such a mood as this he went to Mrs. Winifred Webb's house on the afternoon of the day in which Agnes Carlton had come upon him and David Alexander talking together in the Library Square. It was possible that Gordon's increasing knowledge of Agnes Carlton's mind and character was revealing to him those needs most deep and human in his own being; for certainly each time that he saw her he seemed to gain a fresh view of the beauty of love and sympathy. Yet he felt sure that this was in no sense the beginning of a passionate attachment, because an air-built castle of his own creation had some time ago taken hold of his imagination, and since then he had seen all women through the atmosphere surrounding the one whom he loved. This one was Katherine Webb, the oldest daughter of Mrs. Winifred Webb, a girl of rare grace and beauty.

After climbing a steep flight of a dozen or more steps, guarded on both sides by curiously curled iron railings, Gordon entered the doorway of the Webb house, and came unexpectedly upon Katherine alone in the old-fashioned drawing-room, a room long, high, spacious and dignified, in the style of forty years ago. The girl, scarcely twenty, was seated with an easy pose

in the corner of a high-backed sofa, her head, resting upon her left hand, thrown back with a splendid carriage. She wore a rich summer gown of delicate muslin, the bodice of which was *décolleté*, and pinned against her left breast was a bunch of pink rosebuds—a flower which she much affected. A single rose of the same shade was in her dark hair. As Gordon entered the room and Katherine came forward to greet him, he saw that in her right hand she held the bow to her violin which lay on the sofa where she had been sitting. The beauty of this girl always startled Gordon, accustomed as he was to the effects produced by poverty; yet it gratified something in him in a way that it had never before been gratified. Doubtless it was that love of beauty for its own sake which he possessed in fuller measure than he realized. As Katherine moved toward Gordon, a feeling of youth and summer filled his senses.

Removing the violin, Gordon took its place on the sofa, while Katherine seated herself in the corner just as he had found her. After a few moments of silence, in which Katherine's apprehension commenced to be aroused by the somewhat careless manner in which Gordon turned her violin questioningly from side to side, he said:

"That looks rather mellow and fine."

The girl leaned forward rescuing the instrument from his ruthless hands and placing it in a chair near by, she replied:

"Yes, and no doubt the money it cost would startle our neighbors very much, if they knew—but they shall

never know!" she added, a merry twinkle in her dark eyes.

"Even should they know, I cannot see that they have any right to make it a matter of comment," said Gordon.

"Right has nothing to do with it," said the girl, adding, "Have you not lived long enough in Plantersville, Mr. Gordon, to know that here we have no reservations—that all our private matters are treated as public property?"

"I have heard," said Gordon amusedly, "that one of the requisites of an agreeable talker is a genuine, or assumed, interest in the concerns of others, and I presume that Plantersville society directs its conversation along this line."

"That theory," replied Katherine, "is certainly finely exemplified here. And but for the impertinence, I might suggest that there are not a few gracious dames of ripe years in this town, whose conversation upon the affairs of their friends is in itself little short of a liberal education."

"Then you think there is no sacred soil; that the mysteries are everywhere profaned?" questioned Gordon.

"I suppose," replied the girl, "it is but natural for people to follow their instincts; nearly every one wants entertainment, and as it seems to be more interesting to talk about people than things, we all come in for a share and so the ball is kept rolling."

"Doubtless," answered Gordon, "and possibly should we entirely avoid personal talk, we might be-

come in time very dull and unsympathetic." Gordon was not much of a talker himself, but his manner when he did talk was singularly suave and winning, and the gentleness of his speech gave a special charm to whatever he had to say. It was for these reasons that no one ever met him without wishing to meet him again; and it was not strange that Katherine Webb, scarcely twenty, impressionable and responsive, found him, despite his irregular habits and his poverty, more interesting than any man of her acquaintance.

As usual, Katherine and Gordon found a good deal to say to one another, but not so much that their conversation did not give place at certain points to Katherine's violin. Katherine Webb had none of the attributes of an amazing genius, but she loved music genuinely. At times, especially with her violin, she did not seem to be wholly uninspired; so graceful, so charming was her touch that it communicated itself easily, filling her hearers with delight. And so it was with Gordon this afternoon, as the quaint old drawing-room rang with as sweet a concord of sounds as it had ever known in its days of fashion and high revelry. Thus for him the time slipped speedily away; the tall, slender girl in her corner of the old, high-back sofa, one moment the violin in her hands, and another laying it aside to talk agreeably of the things which made the common life of the world in which she and Gordon lived. When the low-lying sun was burnishing the out-door world with saffron and pink, the spell which had held Archibald Gordon was rudely broken by the appearance of Mrs. Winifred Webb.

Though in the forties, Mrs. Webb had a pretty, girlish figure, and in a gown of soft white muslin looked far more like the elder sister than the mother of the tall Katherine. Her complexion was singularly fair and formed a marked contrast to the dark hair and lustrous eyes of her daughter. As Gordon greeted Mrs. Webb and noted her undimmed charms, he little wondered that she had made herself the natural center of the most interesting people in Plantersville. In Mrs. Webb's manner there was all the easy grace and vivacity of the woman of the world, who could pass readily from a discussion of deep philosophy to the latest items of social life. Her face was charming, full of brightness and intensity, and her mouth seemed expressive of the most unsuspecting good-humor, which a voice always musical rendered very fascinating. Yet Mrs. Webb's good-humor was not always as unsuspecting as it seemed, and the musical voice concealed at times a sting she meant should lurk there.

"The increasing taste for solid comfort and easy living is responsible, I suppose," said she in her delightful manner, "for such a situation as this." For the moment Gordon scarcely perceived her meaning, and a certain characteristic shyness began to come over him. It was soon apparent, however, that Katherine understood her mother entirely and knew how to take her thrusts.

"It was much more comfortable in-doors this afternoon, Mamma," replied the girl, "than it would have been out; and you know I detest the glare of the sun."

Mrs. Webb seated herself opposite to Katherine and Gordon, saying as she did so: "Katherine reminds me always of those complacent but impracticable spirits who say: Give us the luxuries of life and we care not who has the necessaries."

"You see, Mr. Gordon," said Katherine laughingly, "when with Mamma, one has to speak up and take care of himself, or he is soon entirely lost sight of. The truth is," added the girl, "I inherit all the tastes and tendencies of those dear old ancestors of whom Mamma is so fond of talking. I begin, however, to see that to-day these tastes are more honored in the breach than in the observance." The girl's dark eyes sparkled as she spoke and looked with frank merri-ment into those of her mother.

"Well done," replied the mother, "but never forget

'We must revere our sires; they were a famous race of men.

For every glass of port we drink, they nothing thought of ten.'"

The career of Mrs. Winifred Webb had been somewhat romantic, though not reading exactly like a fairy story. The only daughter of a Virginia planter of large means, she had in her young days been the queen of all hearts in Tidewater Virginia, as they call the shore region, and was known far and wide as "the pretty Winifred Grey." At the age of twenty she made a sentimental marriage with William Webb, the most aristocratic, the most delightful, the most impecunious young man of her whole acquaintance. With the flight of years children came, then Mrs. Webb's parents died, and finally the husband, who through all the time of his marriage had led an idle

and careless life, was gathered to his fathers; and the young widow was left to find her cheerful march of existence rudely interrupted by heavy cares and straitened circumstances. It was a great height from which to fall, and at first Mrs. Webb felt that she was not equal to the situation. But her resources were just the kind which find appreciation in the world, and this she readily saw. So, wisely gathering together what remained of her father's estate, she removed with her young family to Plantersville, and after settling herself there in the plain, old-fashioned brick house described, she took up the broken thread of life and proceeded to make the best use possible of her brilliant powers. And such good use did she make of them that in all Plantersville there was no social position quite so interesting as hers; no one ever mentioned the straitened circumstances of the Webb family, and but few thought of them.

After Archibald Gordon had gone, Mrs. Webb said very quietly: "Katherine, I warn you that all such afternoons as this has been are a sheer waste of time."

"But, Mamma," said the girl, "you know that you worship geniuses, and I have heard you say often that Mr. Gordon is more of one than any man in Plantersville."

"Yes, my dear," replied Mrs. Webb, "you are right; but I worship successful geniuses, you must remember."

"But certainly we have many of the other kind in this house from time to time," protested the girl, thrown back in self-defense upon bare facts.



"That I admit," replied Mrs. Webb, "and many reasons are responsible for it. In some cases I have been prompted by generous feelings, wishing to help forward a struggling man; in others I have thought only of the entertainment of myself and friends, which was selfish, I confess. But you, Katherine, must bear in mind one thing which I never forget. Men who are predestined failures I never allow myself to consider as bearing any close relationship to my daughters. What I say may seem hard, my dear; but you must recollect what as a family we have passed through, and see that we can afford no other course." The girl's beautiful face had grown crimson as her mother spoke, and without another word she rushed from the drawing-room, in part to hide her own distress and confusion, and in part because her mind saw the wisdom of her mother's words, while her heart pronounced against them, calling them cruel and unjust.

Gordon was a passionate lover of nature, and sometimes, when the mood was on him, he would wander about far into the night. After leaving Katherine Webb, he found it impossible to go home, so he strolled on alone, as far as the river. There he found everything still and solemn, except the river itself, which came along with a great gush and roaring, after having dashed itself over rocky heights a mile or more above the town. Mighty shadows, like so many giant specters, it seemed to Gordon, were moving silently across the valley in which he stood. The sun had gone down behind some hills which were to be seen

against the western horizon, the outline of these hills gradually blending into the sky which became by degrees as black as the hills themselves—and Gordon was left alone in the grandeur of darkness. In all his past, bitter as it had been, he could not remember having suffered as he did then. The afternoon just gone had brought him the most exquisite, the most satisfying happiness he had ever known; and yet he was well aware that he ought to treat the matter wholly as a dream. A hopeless beggar like himself had no right to look upon his personal feelings in any other light. The river rushed on, and long he sat there listening to its roar, giving himself unreservedly to the spirit of the time and the place. Everything seemed drifting on—the darkness, life, time, and he cared not how fast he drifted along with them. When late at night he came back to the lighted streets of Plantersville he knew that he had passed through an evening which would stand alone in his experience. “I shall never have such another—so solemn, so awful, so almost holy,” he said to himself. He stood by his door reflecting for a few moments before he dared shut himself in from a sight of the silent stars which now shone above him. Then he spoke aloud: “It has been said a man should burn his own smoke if he cannot convert it into clear flame.” Then he entered the house.

## CHAPTER III.

EDGEWOOD is a beautiful spot, and obtained its name from the fact that many years ago it lay upon the edge of a great forest, only a small portion of which survives to-day. The house, Colonial in architecture, plain but attractive, stands on an elevation some distance from the public roadway; and from the front porch is to be seen a fine slope of farm country, unparalleled in its rural beauty. The Edgewood house, surrounded by many handsome trees, is backed by an old-fashioned kitchen garden, where flower-beds take their place side by side with vegetable products; beyond the garden lie wide green fields terminating in a forest of magnificent pines. The public roadway in front of the mansion leads eastward to Plantersville and westward through various counties until at the foot of the Blue Ridge it merges its identity in that of a tortuous and difficult mountain path. At Edgewood lived Agnes Carlton, with her aunt, Miss Rachel Carlton, the other members of her immediate family being dead; and Major Burton, an old bachelor, living quite alone on the opposite side of the road, was friend, adviser and constant visitor to the two women.

The elder Miss Carlton, quaint in appearance and petite of form, lively of manner and trenchant of speech, revelled in the fact that she was a spinster.

Nothing pleased her so well as dealing good and telling strokes respectively to her niece Agnes and their friend the Major, whose sympathetic talk on higher and more complicated subjects she dubbed "dabblings in philosophy." Miss Rachel knew much about the graceful social trifles of "days that are no more ;" and she could, when she would, shed an agreeable light on the assemblies, minuets and card parties of her day and generation. She was inclined to consider the present age as altogether *parvenu*, and was often heard to say that "old people and their recollections are more or less neglected in these days of aggressive young America." So Miss Rachel kept her memories of the past mostly to herself, pouring forth the vials of her wrath upon modern life and its shortcomings.

One morning, having joined the two women upon the Edgewood porch, the Major spent some moments making his portly frame comfortable in a spacious rocking-chair, after which Miss Rachel asked:

"Well, Major, I suppose you are prepared, as usual, to give Agnes all manner of advice upon the subject of these fields of hers?"

"Agnes, I dare say," replied the Major, "has quite made up her own mind as to the cutting of her grass and all that; and it is growing much too warm now to tax one's mind with serious problems." The Major spoke in a slow, careless manner, like most of the Southern people, rocking back and forth, lulled, evidently, by a lazy, contented spirit. If, however, the Major appeared lazy and contented, he was not a subject for any man's contempt, and no one appreciated

this fact more thoroughly than did Agnes Carlton, so Agnes smiled upon him now, waiting for her Aunt's reply.

"I remember a time, Major," said Miss Rachel, "when the summer's heat did not so quickly overcome you. Possibly," she continued, a merry twinkle in her old eyes, "you begin to agree with me, that an indefinite extension of life is not an unmixed blessing."

"Neither you, Aunt, nor the Major can yet speak of it as *an indefinite extension*," said Agnes, leaning tenderly toward the older woman, and smoothing down the fresh folds of a white neckerchief which Miss Rachel wore about her thin shoulders.

"To be sure," replied Miss Rachel, "the Major and I have not yet reached the generous limit fixed by the psalmist; but we have lived long enough to know that the whole thing is only labor and sorrow, and to realize that we have had trouble enough in growing old, without wishing to burden ourselves with the further trouble of getting young again, as you, Agnes, so often suggest we should." Miss Rachel possessed a thoroughly undaunted spirit, and neither the influence of time nor of the world could in any way dim its splendor; but Agnes loved her and understood her, so that the old lady's sharp tongue did not prevent their life together from being a harmonious one. The Major looked at the two now, appreciating their relationship, and smiling as he said:

"But old age has its compensations, Miss Rachel; and you may take comfort in possessing one of them."

"I can see no permanent solace for old age," she

replied, "when one has no grandchildren, for then there is no one to be stuffed with sweet plums, and nursed through a dangerous illness which that kindness has brought about."

"But you forget," insisted the Major, looking earnestly at Miss Rachel, "and there you are at it now, a sure provision laid up against old age—your knitting." Those peaceful needles which have been friends to so many had for years stood Miss Rachel in good stead, and the honesty of her soul would not permit a denial of the fact. Still she looked a little maliciously at the Major as she replied:

"No doubt, Major, your masculine mind regards the resource with much the same complacency as you would a bank account. It is a comfort, I must admit; but I insist that as a solace it is slender in comparison with that furnished by grandchildren."

"You should never forget, Major," said Agnes, "that aunt has an abundance of enthusiasm and a number of hobbies—grandchildren for one, and the beauties of twenty or thirty years ago for another." To Miss Rachel the last part of Agnes's remark was like a bugle-call and nothing could have restrained her from following the onset so unintentionally begun.

"Yes, Agnes, you are right there," said Miss Rachel promptly, "and you young women of to-day may well put on your *looking-backward* glasses, if for a moment you imagine that you at all surpass in grace and beauty and cleverness the girls of thirty years ago."

"We don't imagine it, dear Aunt," replied Agnes, "we only realize that everything is different."

"Very different," agreed Miss Rachel, giving her head an ominous shake and sighing as she continued. "There may be good times to-day; but there never was before and there never will be again anything to equal the joyousness of those ante-bellum days in the South when I was a girl."

"But think, Miss Rachel," insisted the Major, "in what hoopskirt monstrosities the women of that time floated about, and what queer poke-bonnets were the style—all unsightly enough to throw one into a spasm of laughter to-day."

"Possibly," replied Miss Rachel severely, "but peeping out from under those queer poke-bonnets were eyes much brighter and dimples much more roguish than any I see to-day. And doubtless," she continued, that merry twinkle returning to her own eyes, "more than one young girl of that time, in 'fastening her bonnet strings under her chin, tied a young man's heart within'—and that one doesn't see happening so often to-day."

"Don't accuse the eyes and the dimples of deterioration, Miss Rachel," protested the Major; "the masculine heart should bear all the blame. That, I grant you, is far less tender and chivalrous than it was fifty years ago. Then young men married for love—now love seems to be the last consideration—and oftener they seem not to marry at all."

"Is it from reading or from experience that you two have obtained so wide and accurate a knowledge of this subject?" asked Agnes with laughter.

Miss Rachel's ball of yarn having rolled from her

lap to the floor she stooped to gather it up, then rising in all her dignity, she said:

"Not necessarily from either. An observation of the frivolous young women of to-day is all that is needful for our enlightenment." With this parting shot Miss Rachel, holding her knitting and her peaceful needles in her hands, passed indoors, leaving Agnes and the Major to pursue the conversation along any line their fancy might suggest.

"A quality all her own, rare and exquisite, is Aunt's chief characteristic," said Agnes, and as she spoke she rose, and resting her shoulder against a pillar of the porch looked out upon the spacious lawn which stretched in front of the Edgewood mansion. Agnes Carlton was about the medium height of women, though she held herself in such a manner as to give the impression of being tall; her hair was rich brown, and in her large, expressive, azure-gray eyes there was a bright and alert look, which quickly deepened to tenderness and intensity when she was moved. Lines of thought and deep feeling were imprinted on her features, yet the contours were smooth and young. The breadth of her brow was especially noticeable, making her look like a woman of genius, and undoubtedly it was like a woman of genius that Agnes talked. As a rule she talked merely of those ordinary subjects which most people in polite society handle, but hers was an incomparable manner, and her voice lent an added charm to her conversation. Possibly a more beautiful voice than hers was never heard—it was



musical, and possessed qualities which attracted and held every one who heard it.

For a few moments after Agnes arose and commenced to look attentively upon the lawn, silence reigned between her and the Major. A stranger seeing Agnes during these few moments would have judged from her quietude of manner that nothing perturbed her soul; but the Major, who knew her well, judged differently, observing her restless and intermittent fingering of a watch-guard of linked gold which hung from below a full, white silk tie at her neck. As Agnes stood thus she removed her eyes for a moment from the Edgewood lawn, and catching the anxious gaze fixed upon her by the Major, she flashed upon him a quick, alighting glance, such as she alone, it seemed to him, knew how to give. Waiting for nothing further, the Major arose also, and, holding forth both hands, went to her side.

"Agnes, I am not satisfied about this marriage of yours," he said, removing her hands from her watch-guard and confining them in his own. "Nor are you, my child, I fear," he added with great tenderness. It has been said that a gentleman is one who never inflicts pain; and if this be so, the Major was undoubtedly a gentleman of the highest type. He was interested in the affairs of his few friends, especially in those of Agnes Carlton, whose father had been his close and lifelong friend; but his interest was never idle curiosity, and when he took a hand in other people's matters his object was to remove, if possible, any obstacles

which might hinder their free and unembarrassed actions. Agnes understood well the Major's purpose in regard to herself and others, and so she met his words with frankness, saying:

"And yet it appeals to me for many good reasons."

"Give me some of the principal ones," requested the Major.

"The first, I believe," she replied, "is that I have always thought too much of my personal liberty—have sacrificed too much to retain it. To bind myself to some fixed duties will doubtless do great things for me; will make me settle in life and concentrate my energies, as I am sure I need to do."

"All of that may be true," said the Major; "but why have you selected David Alexander as the man to help you do this?"

"Because he is so fixed in his own purposes, so inflexible, so different from myself, that I hope with him I may be able to do what I have been unable to do alone."

"And that is what?" asked the Major.

"To write those books about which I have talked all my life," she replied eagerly.

"And so you have made your decision," continued the Major. "Still, I am not sure, Agnes, that it is the one which will help you to accomplish your work in life. It is not the cold, hard hand of steel which can so touch the keys that they will give forth music; it takes a living, sympathetic hand for that."

"But why do you say," asked Agnes, "that his is the cold, hard hand of steel?"

"I have known the Alexanders since my childhood," replied the Major, "and they all are cold and hard and calculating. It is in the blood. Since David Alexander has been so much with you I have watched him closely, and I consider him a fine exponent of his family."

"But," said Agnes, "supposing there is truth in what you say, since I have gone so far, certainly I must keep faith with my promise."

"The important thing," said the Major, "is that you live truly your own life. If the things upon which you have set your heart interfere with this, something is wrong somewhere."

"Yet the things upon which I have set my heart are not unworthy," she protested.

"No," he replied, "but not being unworthy, they must be done as becomes them. I am only a lonely man, Agnes, who has achieved nothing much in life, yet sometimes I think my loneliness and want of success have made me grasp the soul of things as happy men by their own firesides, receiving smile for smile and sympathy for sympathy, can never do."

"And what would you say was the soul of this situation?" asked Agnes earnestly.

"That you keep faith only with your own ideals, and stand or fall by them," he replied with solemnity.

"Ah, Major," said Agnes, "you have a great heart and it makes you understand many things."

"Not so much that, Agnes," said he, "as that on my own cold, deserted hearth, I sometimes see burn again the fires of my youthful ambition and belief, and

for a brief moment I am what I might have been ; but in reality I am not that, because I failed to exercise the self-reliance and resolute spirit so necessary in all achievement ; and so the splendid dreams of my youth remained but dreams."

"But might not it all have been different, had you not remained the lonely man you are?" she asked.

"That I cannot tell," he replied. "The sunrise of the long-ago is too dim now for me to measure the possibilities of the visions it brought. I can only say that, unsuccessful in all practical results as I seem and lonely as is my life, I am a more contented man than I should have been had I passed the last thirty years in the companionship of some woman who had taken away from me my faith in humanity. I have done little myself, but I still believe that others may succeed where I have failed. The conditions, however, must be sympathetic."

There was in Agnes Carlton, independent and self-reliant as she seemed, a concentration of longing and clinging affection, and this the Major knew as few knew it. Archibald Gordon had discerned it in a measure, but he had not the right to speak to her as the Major had done, seeking to hold her back from what seemed to be a fatally false step. With such a temperament as hers, mated with a man of iron will like Alexander, the Major foresaw that Agnes would be thrown back wholly upon herself ; and, craving love and sympathy, her heart would possibly become in time "a shadow in a land of shadows," so that hers would be the fate to miss altogether that finer life of the affec-

tions for which nature had so royally fitted her. As well as he could the Major tried to impart to her his own impressions of the problem confronting her, and so strong was the sympathy existing between them, that when the hour came for him to go, Agnes took her parasol and walked with him, as she often did, across the fields.

The shadows of mid-day stole in and out among the great trees of Edgewood and glided across the lawn to lose themselves in the out-lying fields. The heat of the hour before had much abated, for crêpe-like clouds, drawn in shimmering folds, lay across the sun—clouds as thin as cobwebs, not shutting out the light, but softening, subduing it, till, Agnes thought, all earth seemed a vast cathedral with the perfume and beauty of summer lingering in every aisle. She loved the fields and their rich suggestiveness, and nothing delighted her more than to wander about the country with the Major, whose whole life had been spent in the heart of nature, among the birds and flowers, thinking far more of sweet sunshine and ozone than of civilization and men. For the woods and all that they contained the Major cherished a genuine passion, and he loved trees and spoke of them so tenderly and so well that often Agnes told him his was the heart of a Druid.

While the Major was in the habit of speaking of himself as a failure, one thing in his career shone magnificently bright, and that was his record as a Confederate officer. Of the men who bore a conspicuous part in the great civil struggle between the States,

none illustrated more grandly the valor, the patriotism and the manhood of the Old South than did the Major, who throughout the whole length of the war bore himself like the gallant soldier and the noble gentleman that his great heritage entitled him to be. He was a member of a Virginia family antedating our Revolutionary struggle for independence, and when the call came the Major was true to the traditions of his family, which had ever held that to its native State was due its first allegiance. A young man when he entered the Confederate service, the Major gave in its behalf all the zeal and earnestness and loyalty of which he was capable, and the men who served under him always remembered with enthusiasm how he had devoted himself to the cause. With the surrender of Lee at Appomatox ensued, of course, the complete prostration of Virginia, as of the whole South, and the peculiar conditions of that time were found to be most difficult of acceptance by the Southern people. A few made no effort at acceptance, and for these the old life survived as sort of an after-glow. Of this number was the Major's family, who, without a murmur, settled down to something like the ancient repose, and caring nothing for the outside world, lived a rural life of quiet content, satisfied that the old home was still theirs and that their chief glory of being Virginians was yet left to them. This family was composed of several brothers and sisters who never married. Devotedly attached to music and to out-door things, they lived within themselves a life so sequestered, so self-contained, so indifferent to public opinion that a

wrong conception had often been formed of them. Yet there was never a sweeter homestead than the old Burton one, across the roadway from Edgewood, and life flowed on there as calmly and as undisturbed as limpid streams which slip silently between moss-grown banks. With the flight of years, however, one by one the members of this family had passed away, until the gray old Burton mansion was deserted but for the Major, who sat now much in silence in his great, empty rooms, looking sadly upon the harpsichord, the violin and the flute which of yore on soft summer evenings he and his brothers and sisters had made speak in tones of divine melody.

Many years ago the Major made his one business venture, when for a season he had left the homestead he loved so well and going to Tidewater Virginia, engaged in the lumber trade. The lumber trade proved a delusion and a snare, and the only thing which the Major ever got out of it was a closer companionship with the woods which always revealed their secrets to his sympathetic soul. It is possible that this is the only trade in the world which could have tempted the Major, and this for artistic reasons, not for pecuniary ones, as the result proved. Empty-handed the Major returned to the old home, which was a veritable haven of refuge to all who wished to escape from the weary tread and turmoil of life. Little wonder that the Major, with his temperament, preferred his own household to the outside world, for there was about it a perennial spring of vivacious life which made its members interesting and attractive to young and old

alike. The most delightful member of the family was the youngest daughter, now dead several years, Miss Josephine. She and the Major were always in perfect accord, their knowledge of plants forming a special bond of sympathy between them. When, long before any one else had begun to think of spring flowers, the Major would come in from a ramble and surprise the family with a handful of early violets, it was Miss Josephine who would take them from him, placing them carefully in water; it was she who, with some magic in her touch, could in winter conjure the window plants in the old sitting-room into wonderfully luxuriant blossom; and it was she who kept the flower-beds rich with the fragrance of those old-time favorites once to be seen in all Virginia gardens. Nothing was now left to the Major of all this but the memory of it. In this memory he lived, and on the sight of the silent, neglected harpsichord, violin and flute, the graves of his kindred sleeping at his very door with their fathers in God's acre, where in summer the butterflies fluttered noiselessly, alighting now on purple thistle and then on belated wild rose, with birds and insects singing nature's requiem for the dead.

So it came that the Major's life held at this time but one active interest, and that was Agnes Carlton and her affairs, left to him as a sort of legacy by her father, his old schoolmate and life-time friend and neighbor. The friendship which existed between Agnes and the Major was very genuine on both sides, and it had materially influenced Agnes's life. Agnes Carlton was a woman of very deep spiritual needs, the undercurrent



of whose being was tending always more and more toward what was simplest and best. In the years gone by she had known much agony of soul, as with passionate earnestness she had sought far and wide for an answer to the many perplexing questions which confront at every turn in life an inquiring mind like hers. The mother of Agnes had died while the girl was still in her infancy, and she had been brought up at Edgewood, the ancestral home, by her father and his spinster sister, Miss Rachel. Unfortunately, as it seemed, at the threshold of womanhood Agnes had allowed an unhappy romance to spoil for her the tenderer side of life. She had passed through the last eight or nine years with the feeling that fate had denied her the one thing which could have made her a happy woman. And yet it is doubtful whether she could have been content with what is ordinarily considered happiness. Certainly she was feminine to the very core, realizing that no one is sufficient unto himself, that woman needs man as man needs woman to make life complete ; but her keenly-alive conscience had so filled her with an ambition to leave the world something better for her having lived in it that the mere gratification of her affections would not have sufficed. Achievement of some kind had become essential to her. A proper field for the exercise of her powers, however, was not readily found, and long and violently, before age and experience mellowed and harmonized the two, did the woman's loving, sympathetic heart and her strong, splendid intellect war the one against the other.

In searching for what was to set her spirit at rest,

Agnes had traveled extensively, going much in society in all parts of the civilized world, forming many memorable friendships, and being loved warmly by many men and women. Unable, however, to accept as a finality anything offered by this varied and eventful career, each year she had returned for a season from her wanderings to Edgewood, and thus had kept in touch with the old life. There had been a time a few years before, after the death of her father, when she thought she could never come back again; but that passed, and now she had returned finally, it would seem, to take up her life and her work on the ancestral ground, among her own people. Here, after all her wanderings, she felt most at home; and nothing pleased her more than the tall, graceful elms before the house and the dear old garden behind, full of choice flowers and fruit trees. In this garden she had spent the best hours of her lonely childhood. There she had wandered among the flowers, gathered them and pressed them to her heart, cherishing them with passionate feelings, ardently longing "to be as beautiful and as perfect as they." Unguessed by those around her, buried deep in her own heart, was this world of her own; an intense inner life, with the germs of that spiritual experience which was yet to give her insight into the hearts of others and make her a blessing to the world. In those childhood days her indoor companions had been books, and surrounded by them the girl loved to sit at the windows and gaze out on the fields and slopes. A vague sadness often filled her, tears came at times to her eyes; and she felt herself stirred

by longings and aspirations which her child-heart could not understand. The loneliness of her childhood thus furnished her with the materials for a silent self-education; and the intense inward life, commenced at that period, had so continued that as a woman it now gave form and color to her every thought and every motion. Living in so ideal a world it was impossible that at times now, as in childhood, she should not become the victim of a vague sadness—the vagueness of which was its greatest pain. Yet this characteristic sadness was balanced by an exceeding vivid sense of life and a keen appreciation of the beautiful; the result of which was often joyousness of spirit and a delight in all that is fresh and pure in humanity and nature. And so she was often heard to say, that while “the woof of life is dark, it is shot with a warp of gold,” and those who heard her say it could but remember her quivering lip and her flashing eye, indicating with what restrained emotion she spoke.

## CHAPTER IV.

THE top floor of Mrs. Walworth's boarding-house in Plantersville had been selected by Dr. Hogan and David Alexander for the same reason: it offered a retired and inexpensive place in which each could live while pursuing his respective work. At this point, however, any resemblance between the two men ceased; in character, in temper, in tastes, in mode of thought and style of speech they were as utterly unlike as two human beings can possibly be. Yet they had often a good deal of talk together, since their rooms were adjoining ones, through which the Doctor walked freely at times when taking in-door exercise.

Having been married and widowed in early manhood, Dr. Hogan, a man of sixty-five, had lived for many years a simple, quiet life, contented with certain interests of his own, and quite determined to make in his old age no fresh ventures after happiness. A tall, slender man was the Doctor, with a head such as Schopenhauer insists upon for a philosopher; his face was thin, as should have been expected, his nose somewhat accipitrine, casting a broad shadow; his expression calm and sedate, so that he gave always the impression of being a man of culture in the old-fashioned sense of the word. Educated for the practise of medicine, Dr. Hogan had found the pursuit of his profession uncongenial, so after having amassed a modest

fortune he gave up the profession altogether in order to indulge his taste for antiquarian research. All over Virginia there is to be found abundant material of the kind the Doctor sought. In parish registers, in the early records of old plantations, of towns and villages, in county archives, in old deeds and wills, in grants of land and other family papers the Doctor had sought and found much curious, interesting information, and so great had become his ardor and energy in behalf of these matters, that he felt no doubt about nature's having intended him originally for their investigation. Had not the Doctor been possessed of wisdom, so that he could recognize his own limitations, it is very probable that he would have allowed his enthusiasm to carry him still further, even into an attempted examination of the records of the Indian tribes once so numerous in Virginia, for these tempted him strongly. But a true philosophic spirit came to the rescue, and so Dr. Hogan contented himself with what was possible, experiencing a keen delight in the work upon which he had chosen to spend his last years. This was especially so as the Doctor was a very thorough-going lover of his native soil, and he believed that what he was doing would prove of value to students who, in the years to come, might care to make a study of the obscure and curious in early Virginia life. While the Doctor was a genuine lover of Virginia and the South, it was with qualifications, for he permitted himself at times the freest and sharpest criticisms; speaking, when he saw fit, with special emphasis of the faults and errors of the new and much boasted civilization which

has come upon the South in recent years. Yet the Doctor answered with ever hopeful and cheerful anticipations to all dark prophecies for the future. His search for truth among the curious and the old had brought him a peculiar realization that civilization is essentially cumulative. With great clearness of vision the Doctor saw how each generation benefits by the trials and failures of the preceding generation; especially did he see how this had been true in the life of his own people, though he did not believe that, as a whole, they were yet ready to accept the fact. The open mind and the human aim which characterized Dr. Hogan's attitude toward life and work were not to be found in David Alexander. Alexander was a man who could see but one side of a subject, and who was patient and unsparing in his labor because he sought through it to compel recognition and make a name for himself. Sometimes the Doctor was forced to conclude that there was entirely wanting in Alexander any discernment of the fact that the ultimate aim of all great literary work must necessarily be the purification and ennobling of human life.

"Without this aim literature has never yet sent an arrow close to the mark," said the Doctor one evening to Alexander, as the latter sat at his writing table, while the Doctor walked back and forth through their rooms.

"But," protested Alexander, "certainly a man should not be debarred from using literature as a means of practical success in life just as he would use any other profession."

"Somehow," replied the Doctor, "we all feel, I think, that the pursuit of literature should be different from that of most pursuits. You may remember," he continued, pausing in his walk, "that the father of Thomas Carlyle was a stone mason, whose walls stood true and needed no rebuilding. It is said that Carlyle's prayer was, 'Let me write my books as he built his houses.' Such a prayer as that seems to me to cover the whole situation, for certainly it is only by doing good work for its own sake that a man of letters can justify his right to a place in the world."

"I trust," said Alexander with sincerity, "that I do not lack the proper reverence for good work."

"I did not mean to insinuate that," said the Doctor; "but as an older man and your friend I did wish to suggest that it might be to your advantage to think more of your work in itself and not so much of what it is to obtain for you."

"I know few men," answered Alexander, "more determined, energetic and consistent in their pursuit of a purpose than myself."

"Yes, that is true. Still, what I have in mind is also true, that in every instance, in art, in science, in religion, in public life, there is one universal condition—that a man shall have forgotten himself in his work; and he who has not purified himself of personal motives may be sure that he will never be recognized as great by future generations."

Alexander sat fingering his notes and papers, evidently contented with his own point of view and a

little impatient of what the Doctor had been saying. Certainly few men were more determined, energetic and consistent than he in their pursuit of a purpose; yet it was evident that he had no perception of that impulse from within which in all times has become the governing force in the world. After some moments of silence Alexander replied to the Doctor in further justification of himself and his methods.

"I see no one here in America doing better work than myself; no historian seeking as I am to tell the truth simply, openly, and without reservation."

"I know," said the Doctor, "that you are a hard and conscientious worker, and I might be able to grant you what you claim for yourself if the truth which is needed in history could all be reduced to statistics or official recorded statements."

The Doctor spoke kindly, for he admired Alexander's capacity for hard work and his powers of self-denial, and felt that these qualities deserved a higher reward than they were likely to obtain in Alexander's case. By nature Dr. Hogan was nothing of a preacher; he preferred always the bright and direct style of conversation used by Mrs. Winifred Webb, but so great was his wish to quicken, if possible, the meager imagination possessed by Alexander, that he was driven at times, as on this evening, to preach at him a little, daring to hope that thus a way might be opened by which this young friend might escape from some of his limitations. Alexander's character, however, was already too firmly moulded for the words of another to influence him to any material extent, and it was in-



evitable that his literary life should not follow the trend of his individuality.

"I fail," he replied, "to see just what you mean, for certainly all sincere men agree that truth, exact truth, is the fundamental quality of life, and without a stout adherence to it, in letter and spirit, it is difficult to believe that society can hold together."

Drawing closer, the Doctor laid his hand upon the young man's shoulder, then speaking quietly, he said: "My boy, the vocation of the ages has been the search for truth. From Adam's tasting of the tree of knowledge in his garden home to these closing years of the nineteenth century, man has yearned for knowledge of the truth. Occasionally, as we hear it said, a great man steps out upon a mountain peak and signals to the rest of the world—a beacon light in the darkness. And that is all we ever know. Truth is not the exact science you suppose, and an historian needs something more than a good conscience."

"But the main facts of a situation we all may see and judge accordingly," urged Alexander.

"Yes, but not to see beneath, not to understand the subtle influences which make a period what it is—that is what makes a man a sort of Jeremiah of conventionalism, seeing nothing in the future but evil, nothing in the past but good."

"But you would not encourage indifference to well established facts?" Alexander asked anxiously.

"No, but this testing the value of everything by its agreement with our own mode of thinking is what closes the mind to new truth as well as to old error. A

man who lives in this way may seem very sensible, but he will undoubtedly end by being very barren."

The Doctor continued with quiet and dignified step his walk through the two rooms, wondering the meantime within himself if it were cynical to be amused by the innocent absurdities of literary people who took themselves so seriously as did Alexander.

David Alexander belonged to a family which had come over from England in the early part of the seventeenth century and had located in what is known as Tidewater Virginia. In recent years so great has been the desolation of this section of the State, that one is apt to forget it was in the same low country that most of the great and far-famed Virginia estates were to be seen, and that here also was the home of the early colonial church. In Tidewater Virginia was chiefly illustrated that saying of early days, that everybody who was anybody was a royalist in sentiment and a Church-of-England man, which was equivalent to saying that all good Virginians were hearty haters of things papistical and of dissent. A certain special regard for station and power naturally characterized the inhabitants of this section; while everything in the land itself, the rivers, the soil, the climate, as well as the manner of life, conspired to make the people self-reliant and independent. It was not strange, therefore, that this country became wonderfully prolific in men of force, men who had a great share in the making and shaping of many things that constitute the best in the American life of to-day. From their first settlement upon Virginia soil the Alexanders showed themselves to be

lovers of station and power, taking a strong hand in the affairs of Church and State, many of the name bearing an honorable part on the field of battle and in the council chamber. The high-water mark of the Alexanders was reached in Colonel William, the grandfather of David, and no planter of ante-bellum days ever ruled a world more absolutely his own than did this representative of the name, who lived in great state on a vast plantation washed by the waters of the Rapahannock.

Colonel William Alexander was not a man to be passed over without a word of comment. In appearance it would be difficult to imagine a more complete beau-ideal of aristocracy than was Colonel William; but he was a man of strong intellect and imperious temper, and so carried forward all his affairs to a most successful end. Material success, however, departed from the Alexanders with the death of Colonel William, as none of his many sons possessed the necessary talents for getting on in the world. David's father resembled his own father greatly in stateliness of bearing, his chiseled countenance expressing determination in no common degree; but he too lacked the necessary talents for getting on in the world, and having failed to find success or happiness in life had died when about forty years of age, leaving to David, his only child, a small inheritance in money, but a very large one in iron tenacity of purpose. That reverence for position and power which characterized all the Alexanders had descended to David, causing him to give to the good things of this world the first place in

his heart, and also making of him a seeker after fame on his own account. When fresh from college, thinking his first great need to be money, David had tried several experiments in a business way, but finding that he lacked wholly the money-making faculty, he decided, with characteristic prudence, that he must, for a while at least, content himself with the maintenance furnished by his inheritance, and seek other than a business road to success. Then it was he determined upon authorship; but two or three futile efforts to produce something fresh and original convinced him that his was not a creative mind. Face to face with such a situation as this, the genuinely aspiring young man became introspective. He examined his own talents—took invoice, so to speak, of his stock in hand, wisely concluding that original writing was not in his line, and that unless he was willing to enter the laborious field of historical research he must surrender his ambition for personal distinction. So it came about that David Alexander took up the study of life in Old Virginia, determined to thrash out of it some kind of personal benefit.

He was not without opinions and convictions, but his trouble, as Dr. Hogan had indicated, consisted in being unable to see the whole of any subject. For six or seven years he had given all his resolute, earnest powers to historical research and precision of detail, but the complete picture of any epoch he had never been quite able to grasp. Then too, he worked upon the theory that an objective character should be borne by all literary work—that the writer should entirely ex-

clude his own personality from his writings. As a theory this sounded well, but it made the writer stern and cold. The study of history had become with him purely an investigation of natural law, and in seeking to know the law he had forgotten to contemplate the Law Giver, who never fails to vary his rules by exceptions.

Alexander's life in Plantersville was almost the life of an ascetic. Mrs. Walworth's boarding house offered little variety, and going seldom into society he had drifted into the habit of working almost constantly. No wonder that at times it seemed as if the spring of his mind was broken, and until recently, when Agnes Carlton crossed his path, the sentiment of hope seemed also entirely driven from his soul. Still, Alexander had clung so long to what is established, as a snail to a rock, that with his inflexible character it seemed much more likely he would cast the shadow of his own dulness over Agnes Carlton's life, than that she should brighten his with her own buoyant spirit. And this Agnes had commenced to apprehend seriously. She saw that Alexander's mind had grown formal and hardened, and she felt that his idea was to force her into the current of that mind's thoughts and impulses. Was she to become the vassal of this stern nature, or was she, through sufficient force of being, to be victorious in behalf of her own life and its purposes? She thought earnestly, often bitterly, of these things, but Alexander had perceived nothing of it; and as he sat over his work, while Dr. Hogan walked back and forth, he felt unusually confident and deter-

mined in regard to his plans for Agnes as well as in regard to those he had arranged for himself.

Wearied finally of his treadmill kind of exercise Dr. Hogan left Alexander to his careful work of assorting notes and papers, and passing into his own room walked to his attic window and looked out. It was night, the same night which Archibald Gordon was passing in travail of spirit by the side of the rushing, roaring river. From his window the Doctor could hear the sound made by the river as it dashed on its eastward way to the sea. Standing thus, looking out upon the night, the sweetness of the summer air stirred his imagination, and there came into his eyes a peculiar light as he yielded himself to the thoughts which began to have dominion over him. He could see some of the old mansions of Plantersville, embowered in trees and impressive as in the old days when they were the homes of wealth and elegance. There caught his ear also, the soft, southern speech of some passers-by in the street below, and accustomed as was the Doctor to the sound it yet appealed to him strangely, as familiar music might, and touched a chord exquisitely tender and sensitive in his nature. How fortunate, he reflected, that in the lapse of time men forget conditions which have once existed and allow time to repair not only the ravages of war and heal its physical wounds, but the wounds of the spirit as well! For the Doctor the land of his birth was sacred soil, consecrated by long years of yearning thought, and he wished ardently for the time when it was to be made visible anew to the world by means of those silent influences

making for harmonious life, which like the perfume of the fields can neither be analyzed nor resisted. And that this was to be he felt sure, for already, as the happy voices in the street below had told him, it was beginning to come into being like a glimmering dawn; and the Old Dominion, he believed, as in the opinion of the earliest chronicles, was still to be "most plentiful, sweet, wholesome, and fruitful of all other."

The soft air which so stirred the Docor's imagination offered no allurement to David Alexander. For several hours he sat by the side of his lamp, assorting his historical notes and transcribing therefrom, his mind fixed doggedly upon the task he had appointed himself, the accomplishment of which seemed to bring him the highest form of delight he knew. That Alexander was, in some matters, as shrewd as he was ambitious was proven by the early measure he had taken of his special capacities. He had not the weakness of impatience; he could bear to wait. Some men had blazed forth like a new star at a youthful age, but he was content to travel quietly, if surely, along one of the beaten roads, knowing that herein lay his only chance. But that it was his chance he never doubted. No *ignes fatui*, he felt, were ever likely to mislead him into spiritual morasses; no love-sick dreams to send him wandering after imaginary paradises. Bent simply on making his way, he was determined to maintain a thoroughly practical attitude toward life. He knew that this June evening was lovely, but the place he preferred was at his desk, so there he sat, the whole evening through, observing, taking measure of his

morning's work, making one more step forward in his aim to place his own mark upon the men and things of his day. He believed that his aim was now beginning to shape itself into form and figure. He felt that his faculties were maturing, that he was extending his knowledge of the world; and he felt sure that his measure of men and events was as good as that of any other man. The amusing side of life he cared nothing for; to understand the serious side of things was his purpose; and he congratulated himself that he had been able to lay his hands upon just the material most suited to his needs. He was aware that he moved slowly, but with certainty, he felt, and he no longer doubted that he was a person of whom something considerable might be made. Altogether, nothing could be calmer, nothing more delightfully satisfactory to him than his present outlook upon life, and his betrothal to Agnes Carlton had put the last determinate touch to his future. Such a favor from Agnes, who had been much sought in marriage, might have filled the soul of some men with vanity, but Alexander's self-consciousness was already so great that nothing could materially increase it. He recognized that his marriage with Agnes would secure him freedom as to money, besides other advantages; he believed also that it would so greatly develop the possibilities of Agnes's nature, that she would reap from it as much benefit as he himself. And yet, feeling as he did, it could not be said that David Alexander was entirely without personal emotion for Agnes Carlton, for she fascinated him, moved him more than any other woman



had ever moved him; but as for love—genuine love, he could not quite grasp its essential qualities. In thinking of the matter, it seemed to him that all the men of his acquaintance who had married solely for love had sooner or later repented of the bargain they had made with fate; and so he determined, whatever his follies, that he would never marry solely for love, because he believed sincerely such a course a guarantee for infelicity. If Agnes had become necessary to him it was so merely as a part of the system he had adopted as his own for life; that this system was some day to be completed and justified wholly before the world he did not doubt, for he trusted to himself and only to himself in this regard, not even confiding to Agnes the boldness of his intentions. In times of weariness certain apprehensions may have crossed his mind, but he never allowed them to remain long with him. He worked incessantly, passing his days and nights in almost constant composition, never doubting his ability to convert his smoke into clear flame, and to wrest from the world that recognition of his powers which his ambition craved and which he believed to be his just and proper due.

## CHAPTER V.

"You may be sure the pretty woman has her woes as well as the plainer one," remarked Mrs. Winifred Webb, who was spending a day at Edgewood. In her girlhood Mrs. Webb had known well all that country of Virginia, with its marshes, its meadows, and its woods through which the York and the Rappahannock flow, and in those days she had loved to be abroad at all seasons, from early spring, when the laurel blossoms, to late fall, the time of the aster and the golden-rod. The changes of fortune had forced upon her a life of practical activity, shut within the narrow confines of an old southern town. The manner in which Mrs. Webb had lived this altered life convinced all that she was a woman worldly to the finger-tips, yet she loved to escape at times from the situation, and in enjoying the hospitality of Edgewood to recall in a measure those simple, natural pleasures belonging to the period of her own girlhood. To-day she and Miss Rachel Carlton sat together on the porch, discussing things in general and young women in particular. Agnes was passing the day in Plantersville, and so could not by her presence restrict the freedom with which Mrs. Webb and Miss Rachel delighted to handle any favorite theme.

"Do you know," said Miss Rachel, "I think that

plain women often have the best of it after all. People are apt to feel that the odds are against them and so everybody tries to give them a chance." While never beautiful in her young days, Miss Rachel had been piquant and charming, so she spoke as one having authority.

"No doubt of it," replied Mrs. Webb, whose youthful, pretty appearance in her muslin gown was startling to one correctly informed as to her age. "Men often distrust pretty women, and women themselves usually envy them, and more or less they are credited with being designing and vain, whether they are or not."

"And the really pretty woman," said Miss Rachel, "often lags woefully behind in the matrimonial race, because the average man fights shy of a beautiful wife, and the average man is greatly in the majority, besides being the marrying man as well."

"There is also no doubt of that," replied Mrs. Webb, working away somewhat nervously at a piece of embroidery which she had brought as a companion to Miss Rachel's knitting. "There is Katherine," she added, after a few moments of silence. "She is a beautiful girl, majestic, almost awe-inspiring. Yet I believe that a plain girl, who dresses her hair well and puts on her clothes properly and who shows that she could preside satisfactorily at a man's table would have a better matrimonial chance than Katherine."

"And too much cleverness, my dear Mrs. Webb," said Miss Rachel with unfeigned profundity of feeling, "is just as fatal as too much beauty. Now look

at Agnes!" The needles no longer moved slowly, as to the strains of a quiet, soothing melody; all the vigor of Miss Rachel's vigorous soul showed itself in the emphasis with which she called attention to her niece as a striking case in point.

"But Agnes has things which men really admire," said Mrs. Webb. She wished to defend the absent girl, whom she approved in many respects, though she agreed with Miss Rachel in thinking that thus far Agnes had made a very poor use of her opportunities in life.

"That is so," Miss Rachel was forced to admit, "for she is sympathetic and has humor; but she is clever and spirited, and has a hearty contempt for the traditional ideal of the average man—as well as a like contempt, I fear, for the average man himself."

The thin delicate face, heavily marked by time, had a wonderful power of expression, and this, added to her fearless use of the English language, could bring even Mrs. Webb, a woman able to hold her own before all adversaries, under the influence of Miss Rachel's vigorous personality. Mrs. Webb hesitated a few minutes before putting the question which rose to her lips; but finally, when she had taken several carefully-considered stitches in her embroidery, she asked:

"Then you think that Agnes's betrothal to David Alexander explains itself upon natural grounds?"

Miss Rachel did not deign to answer Mrs. Webb's question, but gave free vent to her opinion of Alexander, entirely disregarding the fact that some day the young man might come to Edgewood as its lord and

master, claiming Miss Rachel as the natural and rightful mother of his household.

"That young man is a stupid, tiresome prig, Mrs. Webb, and you know it as well as do I, and Agnes will find it out some day, only when it is too late, I fear."

"A prig possibly, Miss Rachel, but with that peculiar power of persistency which will doubtless make him accomplish something."

"Yes, and that is the attraction, I take it," replied Miss Rachel, adding: "but the something when accomplished will be so heavy and dull, as you well know, that this sad world will be much better off without it than with it."

In regard to her fellow men Mrs. Webb possessed usually a genial heart, and except when it interfered in a personal way, hers was a willingness to "live and let live." As a rule this charming little lady made a healthy and just allowance for the necessary admixture of error with all that is human, and she had varied this rule only since Katherine's weakness for Archibald Gordon had become apparent to her. Even now she pronounced her anathemas solely in private, holding in public, as ever before, to the doctrine that by gradual enlightenment alone are human errors to be expelled. So it was that Mrs. Webb was willing to speak somewhat in behalf of David Alexander, if but in a half-hearted fashion. Continuing, she said:

"Possibly in time David Alexander may be able by strenuous effort to transmute the dross of his mind into something like gold."

"Never! never!" replied Miss Rachel. "What he is was born with him; and that inflexible, iron will of his is not what Agnes needs. You will see her wither under it, dry up and lose her spontaneity, which is her chief charm."

"However, since things have gone so far, may not this be a case in which it is not best to be too wise?"

"Perhaps so," replied Miss Rachel, "but I am nothing of a diplomat, and only know that I can forgive the eccentricity of genius,—never the foolishness of mediocrity, such as David Alexander's."

"Still," continued Mrs. Webb, "David Alexander understands the power of discipline, and Agnes told me that it is in this her own life is wanting." Then discarding the serious tone she had been using she went on in one of amusement: "A woman's position in this life is one of subjection anyhow, mythically described as a curse in the Book of Genesis; but as all curses are said to be a blessing in disguise, no doubt a thoughtful, high-minded young woman like Agnes will scarcely feel degraded by a lot in which so much fine discipline as Alexander can impart is to be obtained."

"Come! Mrs. Webb," replied Miss Rachel almost testily, "this is a case where sarcasm has scarcely a right to intrude itself."

"Yet, Miss Rachel, though people go on repeating the hackneyed old phrase, that the rain falls alike on the just and the unjust, this is after all distinctly a man's world, and man generally gets what he wants, while even so superior a woman as Agnes is forced to

accept unpleasant situations and make the best of them."

"None the less," replied Miss Rachel not in the least appeased by the worldly wisdom or pleasantries of her friend, Mrs. Webb, "I am sorry about the choice Agnes has made and wish it could be altered." After this Miss Rachel continued her knitting, though giving it little evident thought. With her last words an unusual and absent look came into her clear, intelligent old eyes, and one noticing it would naturally have asked, could it be that this quaint little lady of seventy, with the manners and notions of ante-bellum days, heard at times the far-off refrain of a youthful romance which, in failing of realization, had turned her brightness into something like bitterness and made her woman's instincts to flow in unnatural channels? As Miss Rachel was very genuine and utterly incapable of doing anything for effect, it seemed natural to conclude, the look in her eyes deepening into something like pain, that there were things in her own past of which she never spoke, a mere suggestion of them flashing out here and there in her talk, and always unconsciously on her part.

While Miss Rachel and Mrs. Webb sat talking together on the porch at Edgewood, Agnes Carlton, accompanied by Katherine Webb and Archibald Gordon, was walking quietly down one of the streets of Plantersville. Together the three were going toward the historic part of the town, and as they went they passed through busy streets, where all day long were to be heard the rumble of heavily loaded drays and the

constant cries of the negro drivers urging on their teams. Before the entrances to various warehouses, where were stored large quantities of tobacco and grain, negroes worked or stood together in groups, and as they worked they sang, their voices rising in that monotonous melody so peculiar a heritage of the race.

"Now you cannot tell me what those big negro fellows are singing as they heave those bags of grain," said Gordon, turning to Katherine Webb. The girl paused attentively for a few minutes, then replied eagerly:

"Yes, I can. Listen!

'One I know,  
Score me two,  
Mark it three,  
Score me four,  
Tally five.'"

Agnes and Gordon laughed applaudingly at the girl's musical ingenuity, then the three walked on, passing at one point what is known as the Old Market, where a long line of carts with their white coverings, ghostlike at night, extended along the adjacent streets on either side, while heaps of turnips, cabbages, corn, tomatoes, beans, apples, canteloups and water-melons poured from their rear, forming veritable vegetable fortifications. To one who had an eye for the picturesque and quaint, as had Agnes Carlton and Archibald Gordon, this older part of Plantersville was always peculiarly fascinating, and Katherine Webb, with natural, youthful sympathies, entered into



the spirit of the varied and animated scene quite as eagerly as did her more mature friends.

"The confusion of tongues here rivals the incident at the Tower of Babel," laughingly remarked Agnes, as she stopped to listen for a few moments to the market men and women descant upon the merits and cheapness of their various vegetable commodities.

"It all sounds," remarked Katherine, "as if buying and selling were the breath of life in one's nostrils."

"It is certainly very picturesque and quaint and fascinating," said Agnes.

"Yes," answered Gordon, "and you see here, as nowhere else, that we have yet a smack of mediævalism about us. Defiant of change and fond of tradition, these people here go on, content and happy, buying and selling by the side of their covered carts, as did others in their places a hundred years ago."

The three continued their walk, and leaving the market behind, entered a section of the town where many old gardens are yet to be seen filled with trees and flowers. Towns and cities, like men and women, have an individual and representative character, and this one felt of Plantersville, a town of quiet, beautiful homes, and in being such it furnished a philosophic contribution to the meaning and quality of the life of Virginia. Passing on through the old town and feeling its influence keenly, Agnes and her friends arrived finally at their destination, St. Stephen's Episcopal church, so closely allied with the past life of the town itself that any history of Plantersville which did not include a record of the old church would have

been deemed woefully incomplete. Realizing this, Archibald Gordon had undertaken the task of writing a history of St. Stephen's; and to do so with historic sympathy he had spared himself no pains in examining ancient records and the memories of the older citizens of the town. The work had begun to interest him greatly, though he did it in his desultory way, and beneath his touch it was widening to the extent that it promised to become not merely a history of one church, but an interesting account of the religious movement which in Virginia had played its part in the development of the plantation, the village, the town and the city.

The region in which Archibald Gordon lived was one of romantic sentiment, of delicate feeling and imagery, and his unique, poetic mode of thought was finding a somewhat satisfactory expression in this work which he had undertaken. Concerning his own religious convictions Gordon certainly professed no form and conformed to none; but he called himself a Christian, and at times a strong craving for immortality possessed him. Still, Gordon was not a man to be tried by common standards of morality, intention or achievement. His moral nature was strangely mixed. Sympathetic to all influences of literature and thought, his manhood was disturbed by passion and controlled by an imperious love of beauty. This love of beauty he sought to gratify in experience of all kinds, higher or lower, without regard to its effect upon his own character; so that it might be said his one moral ideal was to feel keenly. In religious

thought and investigation he realized somewhat this ideal; yet the real beauty at which he aimed was not even fully reached here. Nor was it ever likely to be, for fine as was his genius it was incurably diseased, and the morbid side of his nature made him the slave of faithlessness and incompleteness. Among Gordon's friends no one so fully appreciated and understood him as did the Rev. William Glascock, the genial, brave and scholarly young rector of St. Stephen's church. In recent months Gordon had had occasion to talk often with the young clergyman in connection with historical events associated with his church and parish, and so the two men, so unlike in moral build, had found a common ground where they met freely. For William Glascock, Gordon's attractive personality, his humor, his versatility of thought, his voice, his manner, his strength and his weakness, all made him an interesting object, and gladly would he, had it been possible, have held Gordon back from the inevitable consequences of that self-willed, capricious, reckless conduct which at times brought him almost to the verge of ruin.

At the time of which we write old St. Stephen's was thrown open to workmen, who were making some repairs in the ample dome crowning the church building, and so it was easy for Gordon and his friends to pass within, without seeking any special admittance. Gordon wished to make an exact copy of some inscriptions upon tablets here erected to the dead; so after walking through the aisles he separated from Agnes and Katherine and went at his work. It had

been many years since Agnes was in the old church and she had never seen the young rector of whom she heard frequent mention. Since her return home her life had been very quiet, spent more in books than with people, and thus she had made no effort at acquaintance with the newcomer. Yet all that Gordon and others said of him interested her, and she was quite prepared to regard him with favor. Naturally, therefore, as she and Katherine walked arm in arm about the church, Agnes's thoughts commenced to concern themselves with the young rector, and she wondered how it was that the brilliant, gifted man he was represented as being had been able to settle down, as if to his life's work, in this old parish, where now the poorer classes were largely in the majority. As such thoughts were passing through her mind she noticed a man enter the church by way of the chancel and stand silent for a few moments observing the men at work upon the interior of the dome. The man was tall and rather spare, but evidently well-knit and muscular—this much Agnes could see; but that he had a forehead of fine expanse, and wide-awake, penetrating brown eyes, saved from fierceness by the kindness and sympathy they expressed, she could not discern at the distance where she stood. She saw, however, even in the half light of the church, that the personality of this man was calculated to command rather than attract attention, and at once she knew who he was. For a few moments only he stood observing the workmen above him, then turning, he bowed to the two women in a manner as simple and unaffected as it

was dignified and courteous, after which he passed quietly from the church by the same way that he had entered.

"Simplicity and earnestness are his chief characteristics," said Gordon sometime later, as the three left the church together.

"Yes," said Katherine Webb, walking happily by Gordon's side and willing to echo every sentiment expressed by him, "and only the other day I heard an old lady questioning his scholarship, because, she said, some of the girls from the cigarette factories had found a sermon of his so plain, they understood every word of it."

"How he is to hold his own here," said Agnes, "without any effort at oratorical effect, is to be seen I should say; for the southern ear, you know, does love the appeal of the orator."

"Of course in some directions," said Gordon, "there are already indications of a storm-cloud. Some begin to shake their heads at his science and some attack his theology. But bless me!" he added earnestly, "no one could question his English, so faultless, beautiful and crisp. He is unassuming too in his manner of speaking, but every word tells, and when you know him you can often see by the glow of his face that his own mind while he is speaking is at white heat."

"I must certainly hear him very soon," said Agnes.

"And you must know him. His circle of intimacies is not large; still, he mingles with the people; but I do not think he is easily influenced. He is rather

the magnet by which men are attracted." Then growing very tender in his tone, Gordon went on:

"What I like most about him is his genuine interest in the poor, the neglected and the fallen." These words stirred a side of Agnes Carlton's nature which was very potent, though in recent years it had been somewhat silent, and as he spoke she seemed to hear a call to her out of the past, a call for contact with the actual and the real, and for the assumption of a work where there was no room for fanciful dreams.

The quiet summer day passed, and the evening of it saw Agnes Carlton back at Edgewood with David Alexander by her side. Miss Rachel was resting after her day of social intercourse with Mrs. Webb, and Agnes and Alexander were alone upon the broad porch. The place and its surroundings pleased Alexander, and he thought constantly now of the pleasure in store for him when, as its lord and master, he should come to reside there permanently.

"Ah!" he said, "when we are married and have written our books and won our fame what a place we will make of this—a gathering spot for all the elect of the literary world."

"Does it ever occur to you," asked Agnes, "that at times you think too much of fame—too much of applause?"

"My heart tells me," he replied, "that we are on the high road to success; then why should we hold ourselves back from contemplating its reward?"

"But is fame the reward that people who write books should think most of?" she asked,

"To me," he replied, "every day brings increasing conviction that an effort to make oneself famous is worthy and justifiable. The more I look around on the strange aspect of things in this world, where men's minds are torn with conflicting opinions, and 'men's hearts failing them for fear,' the more I see the wisdom of my own system. And now," he added, moving closer to her and placing his arm mechanically about her waist, "since that system embraces you, Agnes, it certainly needs no further justification before the world."

"But if I disappoint you—if, after all these years of longing to do so, I find that I cannot write books—that a life of active usefulness is to be mine instead?" she asked, withdrawing herself as she spoke from his cold embrace.

"But you will not disappoint me," he replied with firmness and decision. "The thing is in you—all you need is rightly applied effort to bring it out."

"But if something in me holds me back always from exercising such an effort, what then?" she asked again.

"There will be no fear of that," he answered, "when once we are married. Mine will be the guiding hand. If necessary, I should not hesitate to lock you in several hours every morning, so that you might learn to control your imagination and work systematically." It was evident that he did not realize what he was saying and to whom he was saying it, but Agnes had sprung to her feet before his sentence was finished and stood before him panting with indignation.

"Do you think I would submit to that?" she asked angrily, almost fiercely.

"It would only be for your own good, my dear," he answered, unperturbed. She had walked away from him, across the porch, and stood against one of the pillars, looking out upon the lawn and the shadows cast there beneath the moonlight by the great Edgewood elms. Her heart beat with a misery she could not describe, but outwardly she grew calm, and a look of rapt contemplation came upon her countenance. To give up this writing of books upon which her heart had been so long set, was to throw away, it seemed to her, the only opportunity of doing something in this short life; and yet to continue it under the guardianship of David Alexander, as she had promised him to do, when her whole soul was partly in the dark and struggling with a meaning she could not make intelligible to him, was possibly to undertake what she could never carry through. Generally Agnes was able to decide matters with a degree of correct judgment, seeing things as she did by the clear light of her own heart; but now that restrained passion within her which constituted her strength was confronted by a self-torture and self-inquiry which, for the time being, she could neither silence nor answer. Alexander had risen also and stood looking at her. It was incomprehensible to him why Agnes should object to the method of helping he had suggested. Agnes could see from the quietness and erectness of his bearing with what pertinacity he held to his own view of things; but she felt also that it was because



he believed them to be true, and so she tried to be just to him and to forgive him. What she felt she could not forgive was his refusal to allow the possibility of the views of others having truth in them also. The vigor, the life, the enthusiasm of her own nature, which touched at some point nearly all subjects, felt hopelessly dampened before so one-sided a view as that contained in David Alexander's mind. What was she to do? What did she owe the situation—consistency or truthfulness? And what in her case was truthfulness?

For some time she remained silent, he watching her as a most interested spectator. When she spoke it was in her usual voice, but made deeper and richer by impassioned earnestness.

"You do not understand," she said. "Love is all with me; my mental power comes from interest in a subject. I cannot coerce myself, nor be coerced by others. But we will leave the matter for the present," she added, "and think of it more deeply before we speak of it again."

"I have only wished to provide against the catastrophe of life being for you a series of unfinished enterprises," he said.

"I recognize your honesty of purpose," she replied, "but artificial excellences are like artificial flowers—scentless. Too much training destroys freshness, grace, spontaneity. You must leave me to find my own way out, or we shall never get on." Then, as a proof of her good faith she gave him her hand and a

few moments later Alexander was walking across the lawn, saying to himself :

“ She will come around all right in due time ; and my nerve is sufficient for the situation.” Which indeed was true, as many others could have testified.

But that night was an awful time for Agnes Carlton, for her soul had begun to find that many of the props on which it had blindly rested were rotten, and she was inclined to suspect them all. The nothingness of many traditionary opinions she had long ago discovered, and the implicit confidence with which she had once accepted them filled her now with horror. If, after all, she reflected, she was unfit for the life and work she had chosen what remained to her? Could she take up cheerfully those activities—a life lived for others—of which she had thought in the morning when Gordon spoke to her of the young clergyman, and at which she had hinted in her talk with Alexander? She could not tell. At present she was horribly adrift, and feeling so insecure that she began to doubt whether there was anything to believe in after all. The loneliness of her spirit was at that time fearful. Excepting the Major she felt she had no one to whom she might turn in her present need, and scarcely to him as at other times, so determined was he against her marriage with Alexander. Her soul had become stirred to its very depths and she recognized that it would take time to solve the problems which confronted her. She was determined, however, to be honest with herself and to look well into her present

situation, for that it involved all of her future happiness and usefulness she could see clearly. Dark, tempestuous clouds might for a season shut out the light, so that she would not know what to believe or how to act; but the tendency of Agnes's nature bore her always toward hope; deep within her own heart there was hidden away a faith which made her dimly conscious that some day the mist would roll away and the sun come down upon her in all its glory. With such thoughts as these in her mind she was able finally to put her troubles away from her for the night, and to compose herself to a quietness and rest she sorely needed.

## CHAPTER VI.

IN summer most of the well-to-do people of Plantersville went away to the Virginia mountains, or to other parts of the state, where country relatives welcomed and entertained them with as generous a hospitality as modern domestic conditions permit. Mrs. Winifred Webb, however, seldom left town at this time of year; except for a day now and then at Edgewood, she spent the hot summer months in her quaint old house, keeping her domestic and family matters well in hand, while her spare hours were devoted to the new books which she wished to read, and which social duties had kept waiting during the year for their turn. There were two Webb girls besides Katherine, who was the oldest; then came three boys, so that Mrs. Webb's hands were always full, and she welcomed the summer months when her children went off to visit their country cousins and she was left alone to live quietly her own life for a few weeks. This year, however, after the summer days had fully come, Katherine lingered in Plantersville, and though her mother protested and suggested all manner of plans, the girl would not go out of town, persistently holding to a resolve she had formed of spending the season at home. Of course, Mrs. Webb was too shrewd not to know the cause of Katherine's conduct, but she was

also too shrewd to harass the girl unduly, so she merely kept her eyes open, waiting for fuller developments. She had once spoken plainly, and she felt sure that Katherine had understood her, which was indeed true. Katherine no longer denied to herself that she loved Archibald Gordon; the fascination he exerted over her had become irresistible. She knew that she had enlisted in a difficult cause. Still, as it has always been, is now, and ever shall be natural to youth, she hoped against hope, praying that in some undreamed-of, miraculous way, the defeat and despair characterizing Gordon's life might be turned into victory and hope, and he and she thus made free to live and love one another. At present, nothing in all the world seemed so hard to Katherine as giving him up. What she had set her heart upon she wanted, and it seemed to her impossible to submit to a denial of that for which her heart hungered. Day after day she sat playing fitfully upon her violin, and all she thought of was Gordon, and all she prayed for was a way of reaching him, of spanning the chasm which seemed to separate them. She was too young to see that often there are profound reasons for what seems to us the mutilation of our affections, or that there are seasons of education which we cannot skip, no matter how ardently we may seek to do so. Katherine's one desire was to hasten the ripeness and sweetness of her own life; that there could ever be any necessity for the night's nipping frost or the blighting east-wind she could not comprehend. Tall and imposing as was Katherine's figure, she was a mere girl, conversant

only with the world in which she had been born and bred, knowing none but her own people and her own land, dreaming little of that greater world outside, and of the strife and struggle which meet mature manhood and womanhood there at every turn. Naturally all she was definitely conscious of at this time was that love had at last come to her and touched her. As she thought of her new experience a sense of holiness filled her young mind; and as the days went by a subdued calmness, a quiet, restrained earnestness began to be evident in her manner, making her more strikingly beautiful than ever before.

From her morning with Agnes and Gordon, Katherine had returned home in an impassioned mood; this Mrs. Webb perceived as the two took their tea together on a long side portico overlooking their garden. Discreetly silent, the mother asked no questions, and when the simple meal was over, without protest she allowed Katherine to wander alone out of the house into the quiet street in which they resided. A walk in the freshness and sweetness of the summer evening would, Mrs. Webb reflected, subdue Katherine's emotions and prepare her for a peaceful night. What Katherine thought on the subject was not very clear even to her own mind, but that she needed action of some kind and wished to be away from her mother's watchful eye she felt distinctly. Having passed safely beyond the house, Katherine commenced to walk rapidly down the street, almost gliding along in the lightness and grace of her step. The stars shone silent above her, and there was no wind, no

cloud anywhere, only the soft south air surrounding and embracing her, as lovingly, as tenderly as would a mother a timid child. Katherine noticed no one who passed by her, and the only sound attracting her attention was the incessant roar of the river as it moved onward to the sea, a roar softened to her by distance and the hour of the day into a murmur like that of a forest shaking in the wind. Thus uninterrupted she went on her way through the winding, shaded streets, halting only when she had reached a secluded spot in the old Library Square. This was a place Gordon loved well, and here often, when oppressed by failure or despair, he sought solitude and silence. In her present mood to sit in the places dear to Gordon was all Katherine demanded, and when a little later he joined her there, as she had anticipated he might do, her cup of joy was full to overflowing. Gordon knew this even better than did the girl herself, and her happiness, insecure as he realized it to be, yet made him conscious of a deep music within himself.

Reverently he took Katherine's hand, warm and white as that of an untried child; the stars continuing silent and clear above.

"Hearts are linked to hearts by God," he said. They sat down together, and no other word was spoken between them for some moments. Katherine's youth and purity, and her faith in him filled Gordon with a reverence he had never known before; he was seeing now for the first time in his misguided life that it is such a feeling as the one Katherine Webb inspired in him which, coming to a man in his

youth, can keep him all through his days from indulgences such as had disgraced and degraded himself at times.

“Katherine!”

“Yes!” said the girl, and her hand sought his, resting there in sweet content.

“You do not know what this means to me,” he said, “yet I have no right to stain your pure, young life with the soil and soot clinging to mine.”

“I will help you,” she replied, her hand tightening its grasp upon his.

“God bless you!” he said, “I know you will. But,” he added after some hesitation, “my life is necessarily one of much self-reproach and melancholy retrospect. I have allowed irreparable opportunities to slip by. I have formed bad habits. I have passed years in self-indulgence. I have alienated many friends, grieved others wantonly, so that at times I feel sure that for me the hour of reparation is lost forever.”

All that was human in Gordon loved Katherine, and yet his love for her did not pervert his judgment. He saw their present situation in all its relations, a situation full of danger and well-nigh hopeless. Yet he so felt the need of sympathy and affection, and hers were so exquisitely sweet and precious to him, that he was unable to resist the temptation of accepting what she offered. As he spoke he held her hands, clasping them firmly in his own, allowing himself to be drawn out by her touch and tenderness, so that his whole



nature seemed to be quickened into an almost preternatural activity of thought and feeling.

"But love can do so much," she insisted, as she listened to his words of despair.

"Yes, much," he replied. "Love is young and full of hope always."

"You do not doubt it?" she asked softly.

"I do not doubt yours—nor do I doubt mine," he answered. "My only doubt is how much of a man I am." His voice was both passionate and pathetic as he spoke, moving her to a greater tenderness.

"You are unjust to yourself," she protested.

"No, I think not," he said, "for, somehow, I have a premonition that I am always to remain one of those unfortunates, wounded and beaten, who will die overwhelmed in the strife."

At this time Katherine was a passive instrument upon which Gordon's emotions and moods could play easily, and as he now unfolded, with intensity and earnestness of tone, his own bitter despair, there was kindled in Katherine's girlish imagination a fire of resentment and rebellion which were poured forth red hot in the cry that came from her sweet, young lips.

"The world is cruel! cruel to you!"

"No," said he, smoothing her hands as if to comfort her, "I alone am to blame, that is, my own nature is to blame—that is what has always been cruel and unrelenting to me." Such imperfection as Gordon pleaded guilty to had certainly its own exquisite charm; especially for the undeveloped mind of a young girl; and as he spoke, seeking not to claim a

virtue which was not rightfully his own, Katherine remembered having read that the sweetest figs are those whose rinds have been torn, and with this thought she allowed herself to be comforted. For an hour they sat together in the starlight, under the great trees in the old Square, he speaking to her of his mis-spent life, of the gloom and desolation which rested upon his heart, and she moved to infinite tenderness and unutterable sympathy because of it all. Into this hour there was crowded for Gordon more of heaven and more of God than he had ever known before, and beneath the ægis of Katherine's love the array of forces overshadowing his life seemed for the moment less active than when he brooded over them alone.

Gordon understood well that God's treatment of the world is such that the sun rises on the darkest night, its warmth and light being in no way diminished by the clouds which have hung over the earth at midnight. Could Gordon only have believed that God's course with him might be such as he knew it to be with the physical world, a great change might have been wrought in his morbid, self-centered condition of mind. But this he could not believe, and the sweetness and comfort which he gathered from Katherine he felt to be only momentary. Around himself Gordon seemed to see ever bound fast the cords of the snare in which he was entrapped, and which made him the prey of so much misapprehension and misery. Katherine was too young, too inexperienced to understand the situation fully, but her love for Gordon, fresh and strong as the breeze from a pine forest,

coupled with her woman's intuition, brought to her certain flashes of light by which she was beginning to see many things more plainly. Just what she could do to help her lover retrieve his false steps she did not perceive clearly, but that she could do something she did not doubt, and she was right in feeling that a gleam of light had already come to him through her. She longed for this gleam of light to widen until it should shine like the noonday sun, and to find a way of producing this effect looked difficult in the extreme to her untried mind. But Katherine was determined to face the situation and think it out for herself. Until a very late hour of that night Mrs. Webb heard the low, plaintive tones of a violin coming from Katherine's room and well she knew that a serious battle was in progress there. Still, Mrs. Webb's robust common sense always prevented her from being the victim of apprehensions, and so composing herself to slumber, with no doubt in her own mind with whom the victory was to lie, she left Katherine to fight it out alone. All through the long summer night the girl sat awake in her room, bravely facing her problems and taking counsel only of her violin. Just before dawn the beloved instrument slipped from her tired hands, and her heart became comforted with the resolve to be and to give her best for the alleviation and cure of the man whom she loved. At last she fell asleep in her chair, where the first rays of the morning sun broke about her, bathing her pale, young features in a light so soft and beautiful that angels might have been touched by it and made none the less glorious.

"Is this every man's destiny—to love through suffering or to suffer through love?" Gordon asked himself, as, worn out with the strain of the last hour he had passed with Katherine Webb he took his way toward his own home, there, if possible, to restore his heart with calm and quiet his imagination with sleep. Like a man in a state of dream he walked on, the beautiful, delicate soul of Katherine seeming to hover about him, seeking to guide him and show him the way, indicating new duties to him and a future of which the man, in his heart-broken condition, had never dared to think. "Is it possible," he asked himself further, "that the romance which each man builds for himself is so soon finished, as some say, and that the breath which vivifies it is so soon spent that it is better not to live it?"

Gordon's feeling for his own home was always a sorrowful one, for the fight that went on there with poverty, year in and year out, was a hard and strenuous one; and with such a temperament as his, Gordon had only added to the difficulty and misery of the situation. And yet it could not be said that his mother and invalid sister did not get a certain form of joy out of their suppressed, cramped lives, and that, because of their great love for Gordon; while he, on the other hand, tingling to his finger-tips with sensitiveness, and responsive to every form of human passion and sorrow, found their domestic life unutterably painful. Nevertheless, his home, poor as were its conditions, had a strong hold upon his affections, and it was because it so awakened his sympathies that he

found it a place mainly of distressing experiences. Gordon's mother, a delicate woman, unable to grasp the realities of life, was for this reason less distressed by the narrow means of her family and the incapacity of her son; her great pleasure in life consisted in the wholesale perusal of all books that came in her way, especially works of fiction. Those who knew the Gordons well, credited the mother with the imagination and sensibility which had come to her son Archibald; and somewhat the same sensitive, imaginative, poetic soul had been given to her daughter, Emma Gordon, a woman now of thirty, who had for several years been the victim of an incurable hip disease. No one had ever exercised over Gordon an influence equal to that exercised by this invalid sister, whose life was one of absolute self-forgetfulness, without thought of any reward here or hereafter. Emma Gordon had long accepted without a murmur her inevitable fate, and thought only of living faithfully in the humble way permitted her. Like Gordon, the sister had a melancholy conviction of the irreparable nature of human experience; thus the note of quiet sorrow pervading her life seemed her natural heritage. However this may have been, Gordon knew no tenderness equal to hers, no sweetness so irresistible, and no mind so comprehending and sympathetic. Emma had never failed him nor would she ever do so, he well knew.

When Gordon arrived at his own home he lingered a moment before his door, that he might breathe in more fully the soft night air which, blowing di-

rectly from the south, was filled with sweetest fragrance. The atmosphere of the cramped little house was necessarily overcharged, and somewhat stifling to one coming upon it from the freshness without. Gordon, however, quietly battled his way through it, and soon found himself standing by the bedside of the patient sufferer, who, night after night, lay awake counting the hours as they passed, and seeking some kind of personal revelation as to that teaching of the Cross which says to all alike, "Blessed are they that mourn." Dimly lighted though the room was, Gordon perceived at once that his sister was not alone, and as his eye adjusted itself to the dimness about him, he saw that his mother sat near the open window, while kneeling at the further side of Emma's bed was the form of his friend, the young clergyman, William Glascock. Pausing before the scene Gordon bowed his head. He could do nothing less in the presence of Glascock's quiet, unassuming attitude, as in sincere, low tones he offered the evening prayer alone with the two women. Had Gordon ever doubted it, here was proof sufficient, he felt, that Glascock was a true messenger and witness; rich in all the elements of a noble life, he sought out of his richness to impart to others.

A man of great physical endurance, Glascock found much time to give to the personal side of his ministry. Personal intercourse was beginning to prove a great factor in his ministry, for when people came to know him, they soon saw that they could not do so without being better for the knowledge. Just why this was

so not many people quite fully understood, but there were a few who realized that the influence lay in a righteousness of body and mind and spirit; God seemed truly to be in the man.

When Glascock had finished his prayer and arisen, Gordon took a seat upon the side of his sister's bed, and clasping her thin, worn hands in his, he stooped and kissed her.

"Archie, dear!" the girl whispered, as releasing her hands from his hold she clasped them about his shoulders.

"Yes," he whispered in return, and then looking up, they both saw the face of Glascock bathed in a beautiful smile. When later, Glascock had taken leave of the women, Gordon accompanied him downstairs, and standing together upon the door-step, the two men felt alike that the hour for sleep was not yet.

"Come, let us walk!" said Glascock, and, as they passed down the quiet street, he was the first to break the silence which held between them, saying:

"Your sister always recalls to me the lines—

'I will grieve not, rather find  
Strength in what remains behind, . . .  
In the soothing thoughts which spring  
Out of human suffering.'

"Why," asked Gordon bitterly, "are things as they are, if God is love, as we are told? Why are knowledge, civilization, wealth, even the little happiness a human being may know, purchased always at the cost

of such severe labor or pain?" The ring of the man's voice was one of deep personal anguish, a bitter human cry for help, unmistakable to Glascock, though he could not see in the poorly lighted street the despair that was written in Gordon's eyes.

After some reflection Glascock replied:

"Possibly the best answer for me to make is that I do not know. You might ask me why, God being love, maternal suffering should be the indispensable condition of existence, or why suffering is the necessary medium for the procuring of anything that really deserves the name of blessing? I only know that it is so, an unalterable law, and at times I see dimly the beauty of it; especially when I am least earthy in my own feelings and most disposed to reckon nobleness immeasurably above physical or mental comfort."

"I am willing to accept it and acquiesce in it as the law of the universe," said Gordon, "but not as a necessary part of a loving and divine government."

"I confess," answered Glascock, "the awful mystery of it all, and the great perplexity which hangs around all such questions as these you put. Nevertheless, I am persuaded, as persuaded as I can be of anything in this world, that the meaning is good and not evil—good, I trust, to the individual, as well as to the whole human race."

"Then do you think," asked Gordon, "that I am better for the blighting succession of disappointments and griefs that has swept over my own life?"

"I do not know," again replied Glascock, but very tenderly, and linking his own strong arm in that of



Gordon, he continued: "but I do know that you can make it so—can make the result of error and sin purifying and exalting."

"But when a man has an ineffectual nature which cannot battle its way through difficulties; and when his emotions are of that violent type which exhaust life and leave the character disheveled, what then?" asked Gordon earnestly, shuddering visibly as his mind dwelt upon certain seasons in his own experience.

"When certain weaknesses exist in one, it is only manly and right to acknowledge them," replied Glascock; "but certainly you should determine not to be dominated by them. You can, and you should, direct all your energies toward their control; for," he continued with kindness, but firmness of tone, "I am sure you understand that self-rule and delivery from intense and violent emotions are the necessary qualifications for growth of character and the power of accomplishing anything in this world."

"Men of strong self-possession do not know," said Gordon, "what meaning there is in the words 'scathed by fiery passion's brunt.'"

"Possibly," answered Glascock, "the very control such men have exercised over themselves has shown them the fierceness of the struggle in a lurid light, such as self-indulgent men never dreamed of."

"But the deeds done in the flesh—habits formed, & life wrecked—nothing can do away with that!" cried Gordon.

"If we have done wrong, we have erred," contin-

ued Glascock, "and we can never restore things to their first estate. However, all the tears our eyes can shed will do no good. We must take up the worthy things that yet remain to be done, convinced that goodness and happiness are the result of our own energy, not things to be poured out upon the soul by some unseen power; for man's work in this world, I take it, is, as has been said, to turn himself from the raw product into a piece of fine art." For hours the two men walked arm in arm, talking in this very close and intimate manner.

Glascock had a wonderful capacity for sympathy. To men in such straits as was Archibald Gordon, he was of peculiar value, because his views of life seemed to offer to them something tangible and efficient. Certainly there was no cant about him, and he did not believe in any patent device for remedying social or individual evil. Often was he heard to say, that "Whatever betterment is possible must come through the slow workings of the same forces which have always tended for righteousness, and always will." Though the incompleteness of Gordon's moral nature had destroyed his mastery over himself, that love of beauty which was the guide of his life made him comprehend the spiritual essence of Glascock's doctrine. Undisciplined in will though he was, Gordon's conscience was never asleep and self-approving. Consequently the translucent purity of Glascock's life and the moral earnestness of his words moved him deeply. Again and again, as they walked together, arm in arm, on this night, and talked as men seldom talk with

one another, tears filled Gordon's eyes to the brim. Thus the hours passed, midnight finding the two men standing beneath the shadow of the old library, and from that eminence surveying the cloudless, star-lit summer skies above, while beyond could be heard the solemn, continuous roar of the river, at that hour seeming to suggest all the strains of this world's music.

## CHAPTER VII.

AGNES CARLTON had determined upon a lawn party for the pleasure of herself and those of her friends who were lingering on in Plantersville during the summer. On an afternoon when the sun was shining from a cloudless sky and a strong, fresh wind was tossing about the graceful branches of the majestic elms with which Edgewood was plentifully planted, there came out to Agnes a small group of people to whom her invitation had been extended for the occasion. At this time the fields were already rank with standing grain, and the woodlands were dense with vines and undergrowth, so that on all sides Edgewood was embedded in deep green, while the varying landscape of field and forest and meadowland seemed dancing joyously in the glorious sunshine. There could be no question as to the infinite vitality embodied in the scene, and Agnes, filled with a sense of it, walked among her guests, seeking to impart to them, by a word or suggestion, a portion at least of her own abundant enjoyment. It had always seemed essential to her to share in some way with others what pleased and delighted her, and the sensitiveness of a delicately organized nature carried this inherent tendency at times to the point of passion. Miss Rachel,

however, shared none of this tendency; she was inclined to let people make discoveries for themselves, or, if not clever enough to do so, to leave them the victims of their own stupidity. So while Agnes was all eagerness and interest in behalf of her guests, Miss Rachel, exercising the privilege of old age, sat serenely in her chair, exerting herself to be delightfully amusing and controversial only for those who sought her presence. In this manner she spent a charming afternoon, her enjoyment reaching its height when Mrs. Winifred Webb and Dr. Hogan took their places by her side.

"My dear," said Miss Rachel, turning toward Mrs. Webb, "I cannot tell you how much pleasure you give me, for yours, it seems to me, is the only voice which rings clear and happy above the sighs and whinings of this poor-spirited generation." The Doctor and Mrs. Webb exchanged significant glances, delighted to indulge the old lady's desire to talk.

"There is something in that, Miss Rachel," said the Doctor, "for our friend Mrs. Webb has a certain 'joyful scorn' with which she laughs away the pretensions of solemn cant." Dr. Hogan and Mrs. Webb were friends of long standing and sincere attachment, and nothing seemed more wonderful to the Doctor than the fleetness with which Mrs. Webb footed it among the many literary and social problems of the day; every theme which he brought to her he found enlivened by the fertility of her wit, which, it seemed to him, could never flag.

"I am sick to death," said Miss Rachel, "of all the

shams and make-believes of this day and generation. Nobody thinks of anything but to alter and obliterate. Even Agnes can talk of nothing but the progress of the age."

"To progress, to climb, is surely," said the Doctor, "a necessity to the individual as well as to the nation."

"Yes," replied Miss Rachel, "but to have no foundation lines, to look upon the past as something only to be gotten rid of, is certainly hurtful to the individual as well as to the nation."

"I warn you, Doctor," said Mrs. Webb, her voice and laugh ringing out clear and happy, as Miss Rachel had said, "you cannot convert Miss Rachel."

"No," said Miss Rachel, "for I have all the old-fashioned pride of place and family tradition, and little sympathy for this new America I see growing up about me."

"A restless force moves the world," replied the Doctor, his tall, slender figure towering above the two women at his side, and his thin, eager face lighting up with the play of his own earnest thought. "The march of progress is onward," he continued; "nothing and no one can stay it."

"I am well aware," said Miss Rachel, "that I am a useless fossil, but I rejoice, nevertheless, in the fact; especially when I see such specimens of progress as that Miss Fitzgerald there, talking with Agnes."

The Doctor and Mrs. Webb could not resist the smile that rose naturally to their lips, yet Mrs. Webb came quickly to the defense of the situation, saying:

"But that is an extreme instance, Miss Rachel, and not having many parallels."

"Still it indicates, if rather lamely," replied Miss Rachel, "what I have in mind—the forward movement of things to-day, especially where women are concerned—and some of the results."

Happily for the reputation of America, Miss Fitzgerald was, as Mrs. Webb suggested, an extreme example of the advanced woman. The sweet, soft, clinging, affectionate type, so dear to the male heart, and so little beloved by its own sex, seemed, even to many an advanced female mind, "its own excuse for being" when brought into contrast with Miss Fitzgerald. Miss Fitzgerald, tall and angular, sharp of feature, rasping in voice and manner, was one of those masterly spirits who cannot brook a difference of opinion in any one else. Consequently, in the course of discussion, she did not hesitate to silence rudely any one who seemed to be getting the better of an argument. About a year before this time Miss Fitzgerald had dawned upon the unsuspecting world of Plantersville in the capacity of an aspiring woman journalist, and Plantersville, congratulating itself that so much worth and genius had come to reside within its limits, warmly opened its arms to her. Naturally Miss Fitzgerald's spirit of intolerance revealed itself more and more plainly; her popularity waned, and realizing that she had fallen from the dazzling height of her first estate, she became so complete an incarnation of the intolerant, that finally few dared to question anything she did or said. Knowing that Miss Fitzgerald was

a woman with her livelihood to earn, and that she had no other means of doing so than the profession she had chosen, Agnes, aided by Mrs. Webb, had made a strenuous effort to rescue her from the consequences of her own folly. The attempt was not attended by success, and while Agnes and Mrs. Webb continued to extend kindnesses to her, Miss Fitzgerald went on her way, sowing the seeds of dissension wherever possible and making personal enemies on all sides, being tolerated merely for the sake of the two women who had sought to produce in her a milder manner, if not a sweeter temper.

"Why are almost all girls tall nowadays?" asked Miss Rachel disapprovingly, as Miss Fitzgerald, with a swinging, masculine stride, walked across the velvety lawn about which the Edgewood guests had scattered themselves in groups.

"Because they take so much out-door exercise and go in for physical training—a thing our women knew little about a generation or two back," said the Doctor.

"There, Doctor," said Mrs. Webb, "you are at fault according to the very latest theory advanced. Somebody—doubtless one of those deplorably unromantic creatures who revels in horrid, prosaic facts, facts which knock down all our prettiest and most poetic theories—has recently discovered the real reason why girls are so much taller at the end of this century than they were at the beginning of it. The truth, we are told, is that they eat twice as much as did their predecessors."

"Certainly," added Miss Rachel, "in my time a



small appetite for a girl was considered *de rigueur*; to be hungry was vulgar."

"Judging from my own girls," said Mrs. Webb, "the modern maiden makes no pretense of living on air, or love, or jelly, or any of those unsubstantial things that were supposed to nourish the girl of other days. Even Katherine has a good, hearty appetite, and she is at no pains to conceal it; indeed, I think at times she rather vaunts it than otherwise."

"Quite true, quite true, I feel sure," said Miss Rachel in sympathetic tones, "for I notice that Agnes thoroughly appreciates a good dinner, and calls the things which I ate as a girl 'fripperies.'"

"If this theory about the increase of appetite be true," said the Doctor laughingly, "we must keep our girls well in hand; for if they continue to develop their appetites and engender them by much outdoor exercise, the women of the future will be a race of giantesses."

Satisfied that her guests were entertaining themselves and each other in the ways most pleasant to them, Agnes drew Katherine Webb aside, and arm in arm the two girls passed to the rear of the house and into the old garden, which at this time was a vision of loveliness, for luxuriant bushes of crimson, yellow, pink and white roses drooped in perfumed showers almost to the ground. It was a veritable forest of flowers among which the two girls walked, and the many specimens of roses and other blossoms there vied with each other in shedding all the perfume of Arabia on the mellow air. In this garden one felt that these

blossoms of nature grew in a very wantonness of security, fearless of hand or knife, for Agnes loved them and cared for them even more than for her books, and here she came often to sit with her work, seeking comfort and consolation from the many perplexing questions which surround life. With some thought of the quieting power of her flowers, Agnes led Katherine among them. Katherine had not openly given Agnes her confidence, still the latter inferred from what she had seen of late, that the girl was passing through deep waters. Knowing well what it all meant, Agnes wished earnestly, if possible, to lay a tender, soothing hand upon the pain gnawing at Katherine's inexperienced heart. It was often impossible for Agnes to express in words the minuter shades of feeling which passed over her own heart, and finding this the case now she remained silent, hoping that in some subtle way the things she felt but could not say, might be expressed for her by all the beauty about them. Agnes's hope was not unjustified, for Katherine knew intuitively what interest was felt in her behalf; and the matchless beauty of the world, which meant so much to Agnes, did speak somewhat to the girl as Agnes would have it speak. Amid it all, love seemed to Katherine so strange and new; a thing that had never before been on this earth; something that could never tire and grow old, or lose its freshness and enthusiasm. But Agnes's experience was a larger one, and she knew that love looks different from the point of view of later years, after life has toned us down, from what it does at twenty.

Having paused in their walk, the two girls sat down upon a rustic seat under the green shadows cast by some tall plants, and here a little later the Major found them, he being engaged in the pleasant task of introducing the Rev. William Glascock to the grounds and garden of Edgewood. The sweet picture which the girls made, and of which they seemed perfectly unconscious, was not lost upon the Major, who always had a ready eye for feminine charms; though possibly, being the more youthful man of the two, William Glascock took in the situation more fully than did the Major. Certainly, later, Glascock could have described with more accuracy the details of the scene, ready and keen as was the Major's eye for just such pictures as the one before which he and Glascock stood. In his acquaintance of six months with Katherine Webb, Glascock had never seen the bloom of her extraordinary loveliness look so rich and full. Hers was undoubtedly a type of beauty calculated to produce a distinct impression, even in a land where beautiful women are the rule and not the exception. Yet beautiful as Katherine was, William Glascock realized with surprise that Agnes Carlton's was for him the more attractive figure of the two. She seemed so delightfully original, so charming in a way all her own, and so entirely out of the ordinary in her appearance. Only once before had he and Agnes met, and that but a few days previous, in the Plantersville Library, when Archibald Gordon had made them acquainted with one another. Glascock was at Edgewood on this occasion because Agnes had written a note to Gor-

don, insisting that he should bring the young clergyman there with him. As the Major was very apt to fall upon any specially good thing which came in his way, claiming it as his own, he had at once taken charge of Glascock, telling him his best stories, and drawing out the young man to tell him in return something of himself and the reasons for his coming to Plantersville. The Major delighted thoroughly in a genuine, unaffected man, and here, at last, he congratulated himself, had he found one! So it was with no little pride the Major undertook to relate to Glascock the history of Edgewood, as well as that of its present owner, revealing concerning the latter many little personal things for which Agnes would have lectured him soundly, had she known. But she did not know, and it was as well, for the Major had done no harm, only having stirred the interest of Glascock, so that possibly the masses of Agnes's dark wavy hair, in which nestled a single red rose, looked more beautiful in his eyes than they might otherwise have done.

"I find," said the Major, turning an approving glance upon Glascock, "that our friend here loves the country."

"That is good," said Agnes in her quiet way, her voice as sweet as the sweetest music itself.

"How people can endure town when country life is possible, I do not see," said Katherine, the wholesome enthusiasm of youth giving warmth and earnestness to her words.

"And yet," said Glascock, "men prefer to live in cities."

"Why is it?" asked Agnes, "the way they are built, or the conditions of life which civilization has produced?"

"If nature had her way," replied the Major, "it is likely that she would set the tide away from the cities."

"Want—grim want in many cases," said Glascock, "forces men to migrate from the country to the towns. Is not this so, Major?" he asked with that rare courtesy always characterizing his manner and speech.

"I fear it is," replied the Major, "and besides, I must admit that the prevailing atmosphere of the country is hopelessness. To me now, every breeze that blows, every leaf that springs into being is a life-giving influence," continued the Major, apt always to grow ecstatic over life in the open air; "but I see plainly, though the statement is denied with great heat by some, that the country people are now largely degenerates. Certainly the people all through this district are."

"That is a depressing proposition," said Agnes.

"Yes," replied the Major, "and hard to believe when one looks abroad on these green, far-stretching fields, on these fine old trees, and delights, as we do, in the beauty of them. Yet," he went on saying, "a little to the left of us, a little to the right of us, a little way in any and every direction from this very spot, we have whole families sunk in a slough of vice and poverty."

"I am sure that is true," said Glascock with deep seriousness. "The mental poverty and vacuity of life

in the small towns and the country are pathetic beyond words; and it is not strange that temptation and despair engulf whole families, as the Major says."

Now, like the Major, Agnes knew the marshes and the meadows, the fields and the woods, while those flowers that make their home by the roadways or along ditch banks were as familiar to her as the plants growing in her own garden. Moreover, Agnes knew not only outdoor life, but the writings of those who themselves have likewise loved it, and have dwelt on it in prose and verse. Here, however, her knowledge of country life stopped. The ease of her own position, her freedom from domestic care, and her frequent travels about the world had naturally prevented on her part any personal knowledge of that mental poverty and vacuity of which the Major and the young clergyman seemed to have thought a great deal. Therefore, as Agnes listened to what was said on the unpoetic side of country life, she commenced to feel as if her imagination had betrayed her. She asked earnestly:

"But there must be some remedy for this state of affairs?"

"I am certain," said Glascock, "that some kind of patient work can be found by which rural life may be regenerated—if the right men and women will only come forward to do the work."

"Who, in your opinion, are the right men and women?" asked Agnes.

"Those of wealth and culture, who were born in the country and understand its needs, and who are willing to give their financial support and their per-

sonal assistance to up-building the industrial, social and religious life of our small towns and rural communities." Glascock spoke with great decision, as if this were a matter upon which he had spent much thought, as indeed it was.

"Something like that I should rejoice to see," said the Major. "This drift toward the cities troubles me, because it is to man's instinct for farming—and the attractiveness of farm life is irresistible to many men—we must look for the maintenance of the necessary equilibrium between industries."

"I am more and more amazed," said Glascock, "at the number of men who delight merely in seeing things grow, and who feel a pride in the fact that they have had a hand in their growth."

"Why," said the Major, "all the way from here to the foot of the Blue Ridge are farmers, many of them poor, who year after year grow crops for which they know there is no sale, apparently unable to resist the mere pleasure of planting and tending them."

While this conversation was taking place and Agnes's attention was becoming more and more fixed by Glascock's manner and words, Katherine Webb slipped quietly away, pausing here and there to pluck a rose, but coming to a final stand-still only when well beyond the confines of the garden. Beneath a great elm Katherine paused, a perfect picture of maidenly self-possession, knowing the promptings of her own heart and seeking to follow them as fully as she could. She had told Archibald Gordon that she would talk with him that afternoon, and she knew that by this

time he would be wandering about in search of her. Nor was she mistaken; in a short while he passed that way, and seeing her standing alone, came quickly to her side. So great was Gordon's passion for beauty, and so entirely did Katherine Webb satisfy this passion, that at the mere sight of her he felt himself blind and deaf to everything else in the world. Nearly a year had passed since this girl had become essential to his very existence; within that year he had resolved again and again to live differently, to compel success by the force of his energy. And how little had he done! The old life went on as before. One day, high, bright, enthusiastic hopes of things impossible teeming in his imagination; the wild throbs of romantic, boyish anticipation making a future seem yet possible to him—to be followed by another day when the experience of life with its manifold struggles left him sobered and saddened, bidding farewell to all his visions and wishes. The power to change things was wanting in him, and realizing this, long had he temporized, not accepting Katherine's love fully, as she wished him to do. Now at last he felt that he could temporize no longer, that he would dare to do what he would; that over the cliffs he would now dash himself and strike out boldly into the open sea, hoping thus to dispel the dark shadow of failure which ever hung about him.

"Katherine," said he, "it is only a forlorn hope I offer you, under the very greatest worldly disadvantages; but you have offered to lead it. I fear that I can no longer stand alone. I can no longer do without



your love and sympathy ; so I have come to ask for the self-sacrifice you are willing to make."

"You scarcely know my heart," she said, "I make it with so much joy."

"My life," he continued, "if I may judge by the decline of my strength and nerve, has got more than half way ; probably the rest is all to be downhill. But I am getting tired. I need you to give me courage ; my feverish heart must at last lay its load down here at your feet."

Nothing had ever been so wonderful to her as this—that he had come to rest in the security of her love ; and forgetful of the light which shone about them and of the distant figures of the other guests moving across field and lawn, Katherine stretched forth her arms and clasped Gordon to her heart. All the pure emotions which his spoiled life had ever known stirred in his soul at that moment and restored it with a great calm. Certainly, God was very near to them at this time, and His Love more real than His Law. Each one felt a sense of deep repose in that still country where the mystery of this strange life is solved.

On the porch, where a coterie had gathered about Miss Rachel and Mrs. Webb, conversation went on unflaggingly. Mrs. Webb was saying :

"My father used to tell me that his father was a commonplace sort of man ; but that his mother was a remarkable woman, a wise, moderate-minded woman, who entertained no fancies and gave way to no impulses. Her head never betrayed her heart."

"Dear souls! Choice spirits!" said the Doctor.

"Our grandmothers no doubt were as disposed as are the women of to-day to make inclination or convenience, and not affection, the ruling motives of marriage."

"When women have suffered from husbands to whom they are superior," said Mrs. Webb, "the result cannot be otherwise."

"You don't imagine, I hope, Doctor," said Miss Rachel, "that old women, like young ones, live and move and have their being in thoughts of love and matrimony?"

"The traditions of life must be maintained," protested the Doctor, "and it has always been a point of honor with man to consider himself in some way the center of the world about him. If you depose love and matrimony what's to become of man?"

"If man must have something," said Mrs. Webb, with a quiet laugh, "it is still left him to be affectionate and fraternal. Such duties are unexciting, and the discharge of them brings to him a comfortable consciousness of having done well, without upsetting the equilibrium of every-day life." And so the conversation went on, the talkers refreshing their sense of humor, and listening with appreciative fervor to old stories happily retold or to new ones brought forth for the occasion.

When Agnes's guests had all gone, she stood looking out upon the night, which in its beauty and gentleness, was such as one sees only under southern skies.

"I have been neglecting the most vital and important part of my nature," she said to herself. "Always

love has been all with me—as I said to David Alexander—and my mental power has come only from interest in a subject. I have been seeking to set this aside, to act from a sense of obligation; and then I have expected great results—a miracle, in fact.” She felt herself entering upon a new existence; truths which she had thought exhausted had this evening been clothed for her in fresh brightness. She recalled in the most vivid manner all that Glascock had said, and just how he said it. Whatever he touched seemed to spring into new being; life ran through all his words. Now she understood that manliness and simplicity of character of which Gordon had spoken to her, as well as the reverence and the regard which such traits could inspire; for clearly did she see that her own poetic sense of life and nature had been quickened. At last there had crossed her path a *man*, young, alive, full of fire and enthusiasm, who was yet worthy of all honor.

As Agnes stood thus, filled with her own thoughts and the beauty of the night, the Major was walking alone across the fields beyond Edgewood. A certain calmness filled his spirit, and he too felt as if a fresh breath had been breathed into his nostrils.

“When a man lives with God, his voice shall be sweet as the murmur of the brook and the rustle of the corn.” These words seemed to take strong hold of the Major’s imagination, and alone in the fields at midnight, he walked back and forth, the wind blowing strong about him, the heavens peaceful and star-lit above, while in solemn tones he repeated again and again the same words.

## CHAPTER VIII.

DAVID ALEXANDER had not been present at the Edgewood lawn party. Some days before he had left Plantersville for his summer vacation, which he was spending, in characteristic fashion, by overhauling the county records wherever his travels took him. The engagement between Agnes and himself continued, the situation being little changed; uncertainty and anxiety possessing her mind, while his was, on the whole, confident as to the future. For some weeks before Alexander went away Agnes had been able to fix her mind upon her studies with only the very poorest results, and when he was no longer by her side, urging her on, she decided to discard her books and writing entirely for a time, hoping to take them up later with fresh interest. Just what she should substitute for her usual occupation she could not determine. For days nothing seemed very clearly defined, and it was in the hope of giving life a little more zest that she had planned her lawn party. The morning after the lawn party she found everything different. Her vision had become clear again, and with her usual heartiness and wholeness she accepted her changed point of view, a point of view produced mainly by Glascock's impressive words. Too long had she been living in shadows and abstractions, al-

lowing imagination to transform and embellish life to the extent that she was missing the essence of things. She needed to approach the earth, to bathe in the real, to grasp more firmly the things of every day, especially of the common life about her. Homes at her very door, as the Major had said, needed some cleansing, beautifying influence, and if what Glascock had pointed out were true, she, undoubtedly, was one of those who should descend into these abodes of the poor, and not fearing to soil her own wings, make an effort to raise up those who were condemned to perpetual degradation. As a result of these reflections, the Major found himself forced to act the part of escort and guide in a campaign which Agnes planned and carried through with great zeal and interest. Together, sometimes on horseback and sometimes on foot, Agnes and the Major spent a week examining the country adjacent to Edgewood, especially the region lying on the further side from Plantersville, where the economic and social condition of the poor people had been less affected by the civilizing influence of the town, and so was very similar to that of the same class in the more remote country regions.

Leaving Edgewood behind and penetrating into the heart of the country, Agnes soon found a new world. In this part of Virginia there had never been many great landed estates, but such as had once existed were now things of the past. Here the small farmer had taken possession of the agricultural lands, and though his life was hard and bare in many respects, generally he seemed able to take care of himself.

"So far as a living is concerned, all he wants is a fighting chance," said the Major, "for the lands are not worn out, as is often supposed. They are only waiting for the proper kind of farming."

But these small farmers, each owning his own piece of land, with the right to plant in it whatever would bring him the best return, were, unfortunately, not in the majority. Everywhere the country was filled with life, but mainly with that of the landless white man or the improvident negro. In the heaviest portion of the forest land, where the trees were tallest and stood closest, even there they came frequently upon cabins, more or less dilapidated, in which large families lived from year to year knowing nothing of the world beyond, wholly uncivilized and irresponsible as to morals. In order to learn the true state of things at first hand, Agnes insisted upon stopping at the various cabins on their way, that she might talk with the women and children, and with the men also, when they happened to be present. To these people Agnes proved irresistible in manner, as she did to cultivated people of the world, and naturally free and easy as most of them were, she was able to get them to talk with her, in many cases spontaneously, as she wished. The first day of their undertaking had not passed before Agnes saw that the Major had been right in his statement—whole families within a few miles of Edgewood being sunk in a slough of vice and poverty. Nothing impressed and alarmed Agnes more than the great number of illegitimate children she found everywhere, especially among the negroes; while among the poor

whites the marriage tie seemed to inspire not very much more reverence, for upon the slightest pretext it was dispensed with, the men and women following largely their own desires in forming new attachments.

"Do none of them ever emerge from this?" she asked the Major in despairing tones. For years the Major had lived with these problems; learning all their details as he wandered over the country, and thinking of them with pain and apprehension as he stood often, silent and awe-stricken, beside majestic pines, seeking wisdom of them as he would of superior beings.

"Occasionally," he replied, "I have seen an enterprising son or daughter come forth and make some kind of a fight for decency; oftener than not, however, only to fall back again in a moment of temptation or despair."

"It crushes me!" said Agnes; "especially when I reflect that these people too have human hearts."

Depressing as was the experience of this week, it yet had its compensations; and what Agnes added during that time to her store of knowledge was of inestimable value. She realized as never before the evils that had beset this section of the country for the last thirty years, and she saw clearly for the first time how difficult it had been to construct, in a land mainly agricultural, a new labor system out of the one which had been overthrown. It was depressing, of course, to find, as they did in many places, field after field, originally fertile, impoverished now by reckless and unskilled tillage, or abandoned for want of energy and

means. Still, in the midst of so trying a situation, they encountered many men full of strength and self-denial, who were taking hold of the soil, and by patient endurance and toil were winning it back to its old-time productiveness and beauty. So, while there was decadence on the one hand, there was on the other much that was instinct with present vigor. Besides obtaining these impressions, everything throughout the country itself gave Agnes new ideas and pleasures; while so strong was the Major's local sentiment that Agnes felt her sympathies expanded daily by contact with him. All along the highways they passed places of traditional and historic interest. Of these the Major delighted to talk, as well as of many other spots, old and hoary now, where once generation had followed generation under the shade of the same trees, enjoying that happy, leisurely life which the great plantations fostered. Each evening when Agnes returned to Edgewood and reflected upon the experience and observation of the day just passed, she felt more and more that her mind was becoming well ventilated; which indeed was true, for the isolation and independence of this time were working mightily for her emancipation.

One day, when crossing a piece of old pasture land that was especially wild and beautiful, Agnes and the Major decided to dismount from their horses and tether them there for a while. Much of this pasture was boggy and broken into hollows, with little brooks trickling through them, and while there was not much verdure in it, there was enough, growing in



scraps and clumps, for their horses, so they sat down against a thicket of white birches. The only sound that came to them was the cawing of a flock of crows. On looking attentively about the old pasture the Major observed marks of ancient furrows, indicating that possibly half a century ago a former owner had plowed it and planted it with corn or rye. But it was labor lost, for certainly the grain must have matured too poorly to warrant harvesting, and since then the land had evidently been left to take care of itself, until now it showed a marked tendency to return to its original wooded state.

Silent and deserted as the spot seemed, it really teemed with life, life of the lesser sort, and seeing this the Major said:

"There is no civilization in this lower world; here all is savagery and warfare."

"What a life of fear," said Agnes, "the little creatures of this earth must live, if in any way they realize their constant peril."

"The insects, I should think," replied the Major, "do not realize it to any extent. Yet a little further up in the scale we see a distinct realization of it—as in mice and rabbits and birds."

"Subject as insects are to the attacks of every wild creature of the field and air, they must wage a ceaseless battle for self-preservation," continued Agnes.

"Yet, I dare say," replied the Major, "from their point of view man is the most constant disturber of their peace. Look!" said he, overturning with his foot a flat stone beneath which all sorts of odd creep-

ing things had made their home. "Here," he continued, "you get some idea of the abounding life on the earth's surface these hot summer days; but how easily I could crush it all!"

"That is interesting," said Agnes, "because the first impression one would get on a day like this would be that the world is one of perfect harmony and unsullied beauty."

"Yes," replied the Major, "but we need only to come a little closer to the facts to see that so quiet a spot even as this is the scene of wholesale butchery."

"That makes one feel like recoiling from a world in which such injustice and savagery are part of the general scheme."

"But we must look still further, and then it is seen that all this hatred and strife, this wholesale death, furnish the indispensable conditions for the evolution of higher types of life."

"Still, that does not make things less bewildering," said Agnes, thinking of the fierce battles waged by the poor and degraded as being similar to these continued from day to day by the creatures of the air.

"Certainly," answered the Major, "nature's ways are above our comprehension; yet I am firm in the belief that underlying this constant struggle for life is a deep ethical purpose, which in the fulness of time will give to the world 'man made perfect'—the masterpiece toward which the cosmic process has all along been tending."

"At times," mused Agnes, "it looks very much as if the process had no sort of relation to moral ends."

"Subtract from the universe its ethical meaning and nothing remains but an unreal phantom."

"Then you think that spiritual perfection is the end that was involved in the beginning?"

"It is the only explanation of misery and wrongdoing," said the Major.

"And so the crown of life is reserved for him that *overcometh*," added Agnes.

"Yes, I am sure of that," he replied, and for a time silence fell between them.

On another day, after having visited a family living in very depressing conditions, they halted in a pine wood where, having tied their horses to trees, they walked about beneath what seemed a lofty ceiling, the sunbeams streaming through feathery arches and brightening the ground. Their mood was a very subdued one, like that inspired by a grand cathedral. Looking abroad their eyes fell upon a waving sea of evergreen, covering every slope and hollow with rich, triumphant life. Never had a forest seemed more lavishly furnished.

"Even the blind must enjoy these woods," said the Major, drinking in their fragrance, and listening to the music of the wind in the tree-tops. "And yet," he added after a moment's reflection, "even so wonderful a thing as a tree withers and dies."

"Man is even more wonderful than a tree and yet he dies," said Agnes.

"There is a theory that death is not a necessary event."

"And yet were men to live forever, do you think that their condition would be improved?"

"It is doubtful," replied the Major, "and certainly it would increase the struggle of those coming into the world."

"What a mystery it all is!" said Agnes.

"And nothing is so strange," said the Major, "as life itself—how it comes and how it ceases. Think of the tiny cells of life, yet each cell carrying within itself the substance of all that is law and order and existence."

"If we might only know what life really is, we should know everything."

"Yes, and yet how little we really know, though what we recognize as the life principle lurks in every mineral, as well as in every flower and animal throughout the universe."

"And all on its way to a higher evolution, as you said the other day."

"I have an idea," said the Major, "that when we shall have attained to a conception of a living, material universe, animated by spirit, the mystery of nature will be solved."

As these days went by, many cabins and farm-houses sprinkled over hill and dale, or shut out from the world by forests, were found and visited by Agnes and the Major. Sometimes a weariness of heart and limb came to them both, and there seemed no end to the white, hot roads winding lazily before them under the burning sun. Again they experienced nothing but buoyancy of spirit, and the interest of the little world

they visited seemed, especially to Agnes, as great and absorbing as any she had ever known. Everywhere she found but a half-awakened consciousness, and yet it was evident that some common feeling bound all the poor whites together on the one hand, and all the negroes on the other, a feeling arising, no doubt, from a common hardship in poverty, in poor lands, and in bad living. All of this caused Agnes to ask many searching questions, both of herself and of those she met, and though it was evident that a veil necessarily hung between her and these people, many of whom had lived all their lives under the very shadow of Edgewood, it soon became clear to her that they thought some thoughts together, even if, when spoken, a different language were used.

One evening, about the close of day, Agnes and the Major stopped for a conversation with a man by the name of Tom Ford, who lived with his family in a one-and-a-half-room cabin in the hollow of a small clearing very near the Edgewood forests. Ford was a tall, thin, hard-working fellow, who cut cord-wood for a living, and so managed to make, when working, about a dollar a day. His wife was a magnificent Amazon, uncorseted and barefooted, and their children were strong and almost beautiful—young savages growing up in the woods, no effort being made to restrain or educate them. There was certainly something very robust and delightfully primitive in the situation and Agnes was glad to sit down in Ford's cabin door and observe it well as she and the Major talked with the man himself. At times Ford was full

of good stories of what was happening through the country, especially among the people who like himself got their living out of the woods, and so he and the Major were friends of long standing.

"Well, Tom, how goes the world with you?" asked the Major.

"'Tain't no use kicken 'gainst the pricks, I s'pose," replied Ford, "but thar's mighty little in these here woods for a strappen family to git a liven out."

"But you all seem to have such splendid strength and health," said Agnes, "and that is surely something."

"Yas, Miss," replied Ford, "but what's the good of health and strength when there ain't nobody 'bout here these days wanten cord-wood cut?"

"I thought there was always plenty of that in winter," said Agnes.

"And so thar used to be," replied Ford, "but now folks done took to gitten their fuel from town same as their victuals."

"Tom works hard, but he ain't no manager," said the strong, Amazon-like wife, with a wilderness of hair about her hard face.

"I 'lows I's just as good a manager as some other folks I knows," protested Ford. "Likely as not," he added, "this here country is all wore out and that's what's the matter with life 'round here." Ford had planted this year a patch of corn, and this having been poorly tended by his wife, to whom he had left the work, he felt unusually angry and rebellious.

"Don't quarrel with fate, Tom," said the Major;

"for you are the finest fellow in the woods I ever saw. Stick to that and you will come out all right—and there will be plenty of wood to cut by and by."

"Wall," replied Ford, "thar is folks who do say thè Lord's bound to bring things right in his own time, and I 'lows they's more 'an half right." It was evident that a certain fatalism kept Tom Ford's vision clear, though at times he did find the world a puzzling place.

Later, as Agnes and the Major walked homeward across the Edgewood fields, she said:

"How shall man measure Progress in that world where Tom Ford dwells?"

"So often I ask myself," replied the Major, "how many heartfuls of sorrow shall balance a bushel of wheat?"

"Certainly," said Agnes, "people in my position are apt to discount the difficulties and problems in the life of the lowly."

"Great as is my optimism," said the Major, "there do come times when I am forced to ask myself: Is all this life, with its strife and failure, merely the twilight of nightfall, and not, as I assume, the flush of a faintly dawning day?"

It was not to be supposed that Miss Rachel would bestow her approval upon what Agnes was doing at this time. As Miss Rachel herself had said, she had all the old-time pride of family and tradition and little sympathy with the young America she saw growing into fulness of life about her. Such an enterprise as the one Agnes had undertaken and carried through

seemed to Miss Rachel little less than presumptuous, and soundly did she rate the Major for aiding and abetting her niece in what she deemed "a fool's errand."

"But, Miss Rachel, you would put out the fire of enthusiasm."

"Modern progress," she retorted, "such as it is, depends for the most part on circumstances which lie beyond your or Agnes's control. And then," she continued with no little warmth, "the world is so vast and man so puny, that it is a piece of stupidity to be so inquisitive about other people's lives."

"Come! let your remonstrance take the shape of muttered whispers," suggested the Major, wishing to treat Miss Rachel's indignation with frank amusement.

"There is entirely too much wailing," the eager old lady insisted, "about the evils of the world and the cruelty of destiny; and it is the sheerest folly to be running around the earth looking for good works." Sometimes the Major thought that pity and cruelty must coexist together in Miss Rachel. He had seen her when she was wonderfully kind, and charitable beyond all expectation; then again she seemed unaccountably perverse and cruel. He concluded now that it was simply Miss Rachel's way; but assuming a serious tone, he said:

"But you should be Agnes's natural protector in all she undertakes."

Miss Rachel, always perfectly capable of holding



her own, and perfectly capable also of being irrational, if necessary to her assumptions, replied:

"Well, then, if Agnes must go on missionary work why should it be in the midst of naked poverty, when in Plantersville there are any number of respectable people whom she might help? And," she added piquantly, "I doubt not that in Plantersville there are also plenty of the ungodly rich whose free course to an ungodly character needs some restraining influence."

"But the respectable and the rich have their chance much more readily than the poor and degraded," said the Major, "and certainly those who can should make an effort to help the poor out of their disabilities."

"As if the rich had no disabilities!" exclaimed Miss Rachel. "We storm the poor and compel them to accept our offers of help. But the rich also have their disabilities, and yet they are inaccessible, when often I doubt not, they need far more than the poor to be approached."

At this point the Major turned the tide in the conversation by drawing near to Miss Rachel and saying in a low tone:

"But suppose this new interest diverts Agnes's mind from her marriage, what then?" That the situation held so subtle a thing as this had never occurred to Miss Rachel. At the suggestion she laid down her arms at once.

"Then I have nothing further to say, Major," was her reply, "except, God speed you on your way and hasten the day when Agnes shall put all thought of

this marriage forever out of her mind!" And so Miss Rachel was won over to give a silent acquiescence at least to Agnes's new plans, though not quite satisfied in her own mind that the Major's process of reasoning would stand justified in the final issue.

## CHAPTER IX.

IT was Sunday afternoon and Dr. Hogan was spending the hour before the five o'clock service walking around and about St. Stephen's church. The repairs necessary to the dome had been made, but there was some talk of continuing the workmen in the old church and altering its ancient arrangement to suit the demands of modern taste. Any such suggestion was horrible to Dr. Hogan. St. Stephen's, just as it stood, with its high-backed pews and old-fashioned furnishings, the Doctor considered one of the most sacred memorials of the past possessed by Plantersville. For years it had been the Doctor's habit to worship in the old church, and many had been the times when his own thoughts had been solemnized into a more profound reverence by the legend in great letters over the chancel: "Give ear, O Lord!" As he walked back and forth on this Sunday afternoon in the deserted building, observing carefully all the devices of its architecture, he could easily have pointed out the pews occupied in the past years by the different families of the congregation—a congregation at one time, according to ancient records, comprehending "probably a larger amount of intelligence and refinement, and a greater proportion of men dis-

tinguished for talent and influence, than any congregation in the Union." All this, of course, had changed with the times. With few exceptions the last representatives of these distinguished families were gone—dead or scattered—and new people occupied their places. Still, the Doctor reflected, the teachings of the old church had "gone out into all lands, and her words unto the ends of the earth." This had been accomplished without any novelties of architecture or ritual, and so the Doctor hoped to see the pure and simple principles of early days maintained to the end.

No one connected with the church approved these pure and simple principles more heartily than did the young rector, William Glascock, and any contemplated alterations had certainly not originated with him. Glascock's method of pursuing the personal work of his ministry was all modern, distinctly so; but the old church in its quaint, unpretentious garb spoke to him as a voice from the past of faithful men and women who had labored there before his day and generation. He was quite content with the house of worship they had erected, considering it, like the Doctor, too valuable a memorial to be disturbed. The fact was, Glascock did not concern himself much with the trappings of life. In appearance he was tall and lithe, graceful and well dressed, with an energy in his walk and an intelligence in his face apparent to every one. No one, however, after meeting him, thought of externals but for a moment. His heart was immediately felt to be entirely in his work and all thought not directed to human needs to be of little value to

him. Few men experienced greater sympathy for the true and the beautiful than did Glascock; but he valued these qualities only in union with living hearts. His aim, it could be said, was to make the ideal real by connecting it with human life.

Being such a man, it was already seen in Plantersville that Glascock's personal influence was destined to be tremendous. One reason for this lay in his perfect naturalness. Fishing and hunting he liked, a good game of ball delighted him, he could tramp about the country all day or ride a horse with skill and enjoyment; people saw him alive to a hundred interests as any other well balanced man may be. In his religious life it was the same. No pretense, no cant; a perfectly reasonable Christian, seeking to win the reason of other men for that religion in which he believed. And yet, though Glascock appeared to take life so simply and directly, no man had felt temptation more fiercely, or from the pressure of it at times, in the secrecy of his own life, sent up cries of keener agony. But his rule of life was not "Crush what is natural," but "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." Temptations and doubts he strove to solve by working among the poor. As a result he had become so interested in the fate of his fellow men, that he found little time to brood or grow morbid about himself. In regard to his work nothing seemed too small for his consideration. For the dull intellect he had always the suggestive, helpful word; indeed, he was patient and tolerant with all; while children seemed to arouse his greatest interest, so that

when with them he spared no pains to help them shape for themselves the ideas which they struggled to express.

Dr. Hogan, having noticed these things, was prepared to see a large congregation gather in St. Stephen's for the afternoon service in spite of the heat. But Agnes Carlton was not prepared for it. It had been years since she was in the old church on Sunday, and then a rather slim congregation had listened listlessly to the good man who year after year had "fed this flock of God," without knowing how to make their food palatable. After her week of journeying up and down the country, Agnes found herself one among the many who made up this afternoon's congregation. Whether she had been led mainly by the interest Glascock had awakened, by the new influences at work in her, or by that thirst after righteousness so natural to a character like hers, it would have been difficult at this time to determine. Any one of these reasons might have been strong enough to explain her action, and it is possible that a commingling of them all was responsible for it. At first Agnes felt herself little impressed by her surroundings, for her mind was occupied by thoughts of its own; but she became more responsive to the situation when, with manly dignity Glascock entered the pulpit and announced his text: "He that doeth the will of God abideth forever." At once it was evident to Agnes that the young clergyman had thrown off his leading-strings and was perfectly at home as a public speaker. He did not use much gesture, but

from his very first word there was perceptible in him a restrained passion which forced people to listen. As he proceeded, this passion deepened into a fervor and eloquence unlike any Agnes had seen before.

"The world passeth away, and the lust thereof," he repeated. "But work done—that lasts, and nothing else, through the wreck of hopes and the dissolving of this strange universe. 'He that doeth the will of God abideth forever.'"

Glascok's voice was always like a trumpet call, for the perfect devotion of his own will stirred and touched men to the quick. The sermon of this afternoon was not a long one, but it contained many passages which were in reality but records of the speaker's own spiritual struggles. Unconsciously he preached his own efforts, thus gaining a great command over the feelings of those who had felt themselves oppressed with the same weight of sin and doubt. Agnes sat listening to him in a state of strange bewilderment. His beautiful voice, his dignified but vivid action, and the impassioned earnestness of his words suggested such thoughts and feelings to her that a whole landscape of ideas seemed to grow up before her very eyes. She saw that the keynote to Glascok's life and work was in his love for the pure and the ideal; yet his views of actual human life seemed singularly clear and full. It was also evident to Agnes that his mind knew nothing of ruts. This afternoon he was presenting only an old, oft-repeated truth, yet in words so replete with original, virile force, that it acted as an exhilarating tonic to

all who listened to him. Agnes had never heard any one speak who was so sympathetic an interpreter of the hidden phases of spiritual life, and especially did she feel this when in closing he seemed to exert all his powers to enforce the thought that, after all, spiritual life is but a deepening of the natural life. When Glascock had uttered his final words and turned to pronounce the benediction, Agnes knew that she could never forget the sermon nor the impressions which the preacher of it had given her of his own vision of eternal truth.

Later, when Glascock left the church and came out into the street, he found Agnes and Dr. Hogan talking together, standing in front of the rectory which occupied ground adjacent to St. Stephen's on the east. By this time the sunset had cast a rich glow over the old church, and, as by degrees this rich glow subsided into a delicate rose blush, a strong breeze sprung up from the south, cooling and refreshing the hot air from which all had suffered earlier in the day.

"Now come! do come!" said Glascock, "and have a cup of tea with a lonely, tired man." Agnes saw that he was indeed tired, and she wondered, after having heard him preach, that the strength of his body did not become entirely consumed by the ardor of his spirit. But it was evident that his fatigue was only physical, for there was no despondency, no sign of waning hopefulness. The vigor, the life, the bright enthusiasm which he brought to bear on all subjects, shone from his face, weary though he was, as distinctly as they had done in the early morning when he had



risen refreshed from a night's sleep. No wonder, Agnes reflected, he delighted and astonished people; no wonder friends sprang up to greet him on all sides. In answer to his request Agnes protested, however:

"But I live miles away and must catch the next car."

"That doesn't matter," Glascock insisted. "The Doctor and I will get you home safe on a later one."

"Come!" said Dr. Hogan, "I want to storm him in his own castle anyhow, and in your presence I know that he will give heed to my words." So without further protest Agnes yielded and followed the two men into the rectory. Glascock led his visitors into his study. Here, day after day, he sat at his work, with no attempt at seclusion, his frequent guests, whether friends or applicants for help of various sorts, coming in and out at will; he ready to break off his occupation to answer a question or to attend to the needs of those coming to him, then returning, when he could, to his studies and writing, as if he had not been interrupted.

Living alone, but for an old housekeeper and a servant, Glascock's domestic life was necessarily a rather stern one. Possessing, however, as he did, a fascination for people, he was cordially welcomed everywhere, and this shed a social light upon his lonely life. Such a man, too, drew people to the old rectory, and so much did his presence count for there, that the lack of comforts and furnishings was not felt in the old place as had formerly been the case. It was impossible that the society of his fellow men should not be

necessary to Glascock. His own heart was always most stirred by those events which stir the heart of humanity; the impulse, the clash of opinion in social life were needful to him. Thus constituted, it was natural that he should become specially interested in the social problems of the present age, and that he should draw about him other men interested in the same. When, as a young man, Glascock had decided that his vocation was to be that of a preacher, he had become convinced that Christianity was too much preached as a theology and too little as the religion of every-day life. When the time came for him to enter actively upon his work, he determined to make his Christianity, as far as possible to him, bear upon the social condition of all classes, upon the questions which agitate society, and upon the great movements of the world. If open to attack from the public at any point it was, perhaps, here—for conservative people were likely to speak of him as a revolutionist, as one inclined to convert democracy into socialism.

After tea very simply served, the Doctor and Agnes sat for a while with Glascock in his study, the Doctor taking this opportunity of pouring forth his views on the subject of St. Stephen's and the talked-of alterations in its interior. Glascock was very glad to listen to the Doctor, finding his reverence for the past intensely interesting. He promised to render what assistance he could in this matter evidently so near the Doctor's heart.

"But, Doctor," said he, "if I aid and abet you in thwarting the ambitions of my vestry, I must hear

nothing but words of encouragement when I raise the question of a parish house."

"I will help you," replied the Doctor, "provided you do not try to remove any old landmark to make way for the new building."

"You see," said Agnes laughingly, "the Doctor's ruling passion is strong even in death. He has all the tastes of a thorough, old-time, Virginia aristocrat, and yet I have heard him say that he is an American before anything else—a hard thing to believe."

"Not at all," protested the Doctor; "my view of politics is clear and calm because I see both sides of the question. There is no contest between my tastes and my principles. I accept the whole to escape the prejudices of any one section."

"Then you are just the man," said Glascock, "to hold the scales and make peace between the upper and lower classes."

"No! no! not I; the habits of the old order cling to me too tenaciously for that. Work of that kind requires some young fellow all afire with the spirit of love and fraternity, like yourself."

"You speak of me too generously," said Glascock. "However," he continued, "any words like those you have spoken are encouraging, because I begin to fear that I am going to stand very much alone here in certain matters when people know me better."

"May I ask," said Agnes, "what induced you to come to Plantersville, where as yet the great modern ideas have taken but slight root?"

"You answer the question," replied Glascock, "at

the very time you ask it." Then going on hurriedly, as if he preferred not to dwell upon personal matters, he said:

"Possibly you have heard that I too was born and bred here in Virginia, though I spent my college days at Harvard, and so got much weaned from the old State and her ways. When I finished college and was launched upon my lifework, like most young men I panted for the rush and excitement of a great city; and after some scheming on the part of my friends I got to New York, becoming the assistant in a downtown mission. When I had been there for a while I began to see that all our young clergymen were alike—they all wanted to live in great cities; and what was more, most of them were not satisfied unless they found themselves in the line of promotion to a rich and fashionable church. After making this discovery, I commenced to think of these things a great deal. Later I traveled three years in connection with the work of our missionary societies, and everywhere I found the same condition of things—the country and the small towns deserted for the cities by our Protestant ministers, while the poor and over-crowded districts of the cities, where the Church is most needed, were deserted for more agreeable positions up-town. So, when I was asked to come here by the people of St. Stephen's, it was for me the opportunity of killing two birds with one stone; for I had determined that I would never locate again except in some quiet town such as our aspiring young clergyman turns his back

upon, and that it must also be in the portion of the town where the population was densest and poorest."

"You have undoubtedly achieved your purpose," said the Doctor.

"Protestantism," continued Glascock, "must, I am sure, take up this problem or lose its hold on the people of this country. Is it not true," he asked earnestly, "that our Protestant churches are filled with the well-to-do and the wealthy, while the working and poorer classes, who constitute in every community the large majority, are drifting away from the Protestant Church?"

"Because," said the Doctor, "the Protestant Church has grown out of sympathy with them."

"Or because they have grown out of sympathy with it. Whatever may be the cause of this break between our churches and the masses, we must set ourselves to find a remedy." Pausing a few moments, Glascock continued, a still deeper earnestness in his tone and manner:

"Certainly to-day men suffer in many places, as never before, from the disadvantages of a crushing environment, and they lift their faces, looking for a sign of tenderness from others better conditioned than themselves. Now it seems to me the question for the clergyman of the present time is how to get hold of these people, hand to hand and heart to heart; how to shed about them the red, warm glow of real fraternity." Pausing again for a few moments as if for breath and the right choice of his expressions, he still continued:

"My answer is that he can do this only by living among the people he seeks to reach, so that he may know by actual, daily observation what life means for them. Otherwise, he has nothing to offer them."

When well started on any subject that interested him, Glascock was a marvelously good talker; his speech had all the variety of a great stream—quick, rushing and passionate. Especially was this so when his wrath was aroused against anything he considered an evil. These qualities all flashed out as he spoke with Agnes and the Doctor, she watching him with delight, noting carefully every word as of value in relation to her own life. Now she understood why he had spoken to her as he did that afternoon at Edgewood about the right kind of people being able to do something for the country districts. His convictions had come out of his own struggles, and he himself was living the life which a broader conception of duty, as voiced by the enlargement of the office and the work of the church, demanded. Surely his was a glorious hope for the future of Christianity, and it was plain that no personal or selfish fear played any part in the plan of labor he had mapped out for himself as a servant of the Church and a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

For some time the three talked together in the study and when the hour arrived for his guests to leave, Glascock walked out with them. Their talk continued as they passed through the streets, Glascock talking with even more dash and fire than when in his study. The freshness of the summer air seemed,

somehow, to have taken hold of him, to have stirred his blood and quickened into excitement his natural enthusiasm and ardor. Delightful as it all was, Agnes would not allow Glascock to go to Edgewood at so late an hour. She took the Doctor and went off with him, leaving Glascock protesting.

"That young man interests me," said the Doctor when he and Agnes were left alone. Receiving no reply, he continued: "Certainly he is wonderful."

"Yes," said Agnes in reply, and though the Doctor referred again and again to the impression which Glascock had produced upon him, nothing further on the subject than a single affirmation of his own view was to be got out of Agnes. Naturally the Doctor thought Agnes weary or bored, and was glad when their little journey to Edgewood was accomplished. Miss Rachel by the freshness of her humor soon made up for the rather poor hour the Doctor had spent when alone with Agnes, and later, when he found himself shut within one of the quiet bedrooms at Edgewood, where the courtesy of the women forced him to spend the night, he said aloud to himself: "The girl has intellect and she has attractions, but she will never equal the old lady in spirit and brilliancy."

While the Doctor was thus engaged in talking to himself, Agnes upon her knees, with her face in her hands, was leaning from the window of her own room, gazing upon the night. A perfect stillness rested upon everything. The moon shone full upon the trees of Edgewood, making their shadows seem like large, black spots about the lawn. Across the fields loomed

distinct and clear the chimney-tops of the old Burton mansion; and far away, east and west, the forests were outlined against the midnight sky. The whole scene, so familiar, seemed at this hour remote and strange to Agnes; in fact she felt as if she scarcely recognized herself, so unusual a mood had come over her. For a long while she remained at the window, as one fascinated and chained to the spot, and when finally, almost overcome with exhaustion, she arose and turned toward her own bed, some irresistible force seemed to drive her to speak.

“He is what I have dreamed of all my life!” she said in a voice filled with anguish, and throwing herself upon the bed she burst into a flood of tears—the first that had come to her for years.

To Glascock it seemed very strange that he was unable to go back as he should have done to the rectory, where several duties connected with the day’s work still remained to be fulfilled. The house, he felt, would be oppressive to him, so he walked about the streets, and the bracing air seemed to sympathize with his active frame and his free mind and his large heart just as he desired it should. It was his custom when worn out with work or when preparing a sermon to walk about the town, or over the green fields beyond, and often he would sit down in some quiet spot where he could command a full view of the country and the sky, and so restore his heart with calm, or awake his imagination with the beauty of the landscape. When Agnes and the Doctor left him this Sunday evening he became aware that an unusual ex-



citement possessed him—in fact, he recalled that he had felt it earlier in the evening, when he had been driven, as it were, to talk of himself and his work. The only thing for him to do, he realized, was to follow his usual custom and walk off, if possible, this strange uneasiness which had taken possession of him. So walk he did, and rather violently for two hours, yet the same feeling remained with him when finally he returned to the rectory too tired to go further. Immediately upon entering the house he went into his study and turned up the lamp upon his desk. The old room looked a dreary place, and the strange thing about it was that he had never noticed this before. He placed his hand upon the chair in which Agnes had sat, pushing it tenderly aside into a corner. After this he returned to his desk. For a while he remained very intent, evidently writing a letter; when it was finished he took two or three strides through the room, then turned and tore the letter into bits. Taking up a fresh piece of paper he wrote upon it:

“Communion with God is not to be attained by abstraction and asceticism, but by the development of Christian sympathies. See 1 John v. 12.” After this he got up again and going to his front door opened it and stood gazing into the silent street. He felt strangely alone, and there was a wild tumult in his soul which he could neither account for nor quell.

Every one, he reflected, has a mission in this world to accomplish; that is the destiny given man to work out. And yet, he continued, what an awful moment it must be when the soul begins to fear that the props on

which it has blindly rested so long are possibly rotten; when it begins to feel the nothingness of many things that it has implicitly believed; when life loses its meaning and the grave appears to be the end of all, and when human goodness becomes but a name and the sky above as a dead expanse, a void from which God himself has disappeared.

“I will not think such thoughts!” he exclaimed, and slamming the door, regardless of the advanced hour of the night, he turned back to his study and forced himself to perform the duties awaiting him there.

## CHAPTER X.

MISS FITZGERALD possessed a mania for interviewing people, and she would kill or spare as it pleased her, without regard to the feelings of her victim. By this time the public of Plantersville had learned that when Miss Fitzgerald got a notion fixed in her mind concerning certain persons or things, she could neither be silenced nor forced to moderate her strictures.

"What a pity," said Mrs. Webb, "that that young woman knows nothing about a well-bred and decorous truculence which can delight while it destroys." Mrs. Webb had just had a visit from Miss Fitzgerald, who, fresh from a talk with the Rev. William Glascock, had called upon Mrs. Webb to denounce to her the young clergyman as "a red-hot socialist." Miss Fitzgerald cared nothing for battering down men of straw set up for the purpose; an enthusiastic, earnest advocate, like Glascock, was the kind of material that attracted her caustic attention.

"What did she say?" asked Katherine who came into the room just as Miss Fitzgerald took her departure.

"It was mostly biliousness and ferocity," replied Mrs. Webb. "One may as well let her go at her own gait, for she can never be persuaded to be gentle,"

"So the young clergyman has offended her," said Katherine.

"No, not that," answered Mrs. Webb. "He has only been giving her the benefit of some of his sociological views, and she cannot resist making an attack. That's all."

"There will be plenty of people," said Katherine with warmth, "to repel any such an attack."

"You are thinking, possibly," answered Mrs. Webb in anything but an agreeable tone, "of your friend Mr. Gordon."

"Possibly," replied Katherine, embarrassed as Mrs. Webb saw and intended she should be, but determined to get into no unpleasant discussion with her mother upon this painful subject.

"Gordon's cleverness," continued Mrs. Webb unflinchingly, "would not be equal to the situation; he is far too feminine to stand up against the shrewdness and vigor of such a young woman as Miss Fitzgerald."

Katherine had not taken her mother into her confidence, knowing well that the latter's purpose was to defeat her wherever Gordon was concerned. But Mrs. Webb had that shrewdness which she had just attributed to Miss Fitzgerald, and she knew as well the condition of Katherine's mind and heart as if the girl had unfolded it to her. Once too she had been young and had loved—had loved foolishly as Katherine was now doing, and she was determined to save Katherine from the consequences of her own folly; and that she might reach her end she did not scorn to belittle Gordon and his talents whenever she found a chance

of doing so. There is a practical form of satire that makes a man ridiculous by pulling the chair from under him when he is about to sit down. That form of satire belongs distinctly to a more primitive state of social development than that which polite people enjoy to-day. Yet clever individuals, like Mrs. Webb, still feel that they have a legitimate right to provoke laughter by holding up a man to ridicule, or to undermine his influence by aspersions cast upon his intellect or character. The principle underlying both of these forms is undoubtedly the same. Mrs. Webb understood all these subtleties. She knew well what a dangerous power is that of the mocker and she could not resist the temptation to make use of it. Still, while Mrs. Webb knew so much, she did not know all things. For instance, though she understood Katherine in large measure, she did not comprehend the loyalty and the steadfastness of the girl's nature.

Mrs. Webb was therefore a little surprised when Katherine's embarrassment gave place to great dignity of manner as she replied:

"Possibly Mr. Gordon is too much of a gentleman to enter into any kind of contest against Miss Fitzgerald."

"Dear me! when did we begin to tilt against wind-mills?" With this remark Mrs. Webb wisely dropped the subject for the present, trying to persuade herself, as she had done from the first, that after all the matter was a trivial one and could easily be disposed of by her when the proper time should arrive.

Katherine's life had now become completely dominated by her love for Gordon. This love and its fulfilment seemed to the girl the only thing in all the world worthy of her interest or attention. More and more, day by day, every fibre of her heart responded to the demands made upon her by it. Of course with her mother ever by her side, daily reminding her of disapproval, Katherine could not but apprehend difficulties in her pathway. Still, now that Gordon was making vigorous efforts to overcome that morbid hopelessness from which he suffered, Katherine felt that the darkness with which the last two months had been surrounded was passing into a clear, bright day, and she was ready to brace herself for any kind of a fight. It cannot be, she argued, that to love intensely the beings God has given us to love in this life should be idolatry. In imagination she reached out for some extreme form of self-abnegation by which she might make clear to Gordon and the world the completeness of her devotion. There was no demand, she believed, which Gordon could make upon her heart, which it could not sustain. At the shrine of him whose name is Love, Katherine Webb was ready and eager to offer up any kind of sacrifice—any kind except that of her love itself. If she might only be allowed to forget herself in Gordon, then all other bereavements she could face bravely. But to cut away the ties that now bound her soul to his,—this, she felt, would be to cut her heart itself to the very quick. Of course it was going to prove difficult for her to wait—young love is ever enthusiastic and impassioned. But surely Gor-

don must have a chance to make his way unembarrassed out of the confused and perplexed state in which he had passed the most of his life. Patience should be easy to youth, for youth has before it all the future. The world might wear its superficial smile and those who wished believe Talleyrand's sneer, that "the happy are those who have hard hearts and hard peptic powers." As for herself, she believed that she had penetrated below the surface and had discovered what god sits at the helm of this dark world, and that he would steer things right for her.

Entirely without means, it was inevitable that Gordon should be doubtful regarding the future. It was natural for him to lack faith in circumstances, for they had ever been against him. But he had formed at least the resolve to strike the nail squarely upon the head—if he could but discover a nail to strike. He was going to follow the advice which Glascock had so often given him: trust to God and his own soul. In accordance with this resolve, he had set about changing, as far as possible, all the usual conditions of his life. He was working as no one had ever seen him work, pushing forward his church history, hoping something for that, especially with Glascock's energy and force back of him to help. He began also to work very ardently upon reviews and critical essays, and he dashed off at this time some fine bits of poetry as well, these bringing him a small return in ready money. Sometimes, at night, when his spirit flagged a little and his old-time morbidness threatened to return upon him, he would stimulate himself moderately. But oftener

than not the state of intense excitement in which he was living kept him going without the aid of stimulants; and while he still suffered keenly—one day full of delight and hope, the next scarcely daring to face life—his genius began to reveal itself as never before, and when with Katherine he enjoyed a genuine happiness. Gordon's desire for love and sympathy had always been passionate, and this Katherine knew how to satisfy. The loneliness and the defeats of his past life seemed to dissolve into thin air when he sat by her side and listened to the words of love which her pure soul poured forth for him. Yet at times, when he looked upon her youth and her beauty, contrasting the cleanness of her life with the defilements of his own, he could scarcely restrain himself from crying out in pain. This was no fictitious pain, no ideal grief which he could put aside lightly. His own weakness and guilt were ever before his mind, and the force of his imagination made him realize the sufferings of others, homeless and miserable and done to death by their own crimes or by the selfishness of men. He often felt himself crushed to the earth in the face of this apparently terrible contradiction of the truth that the Ruler of this world is Love. And yet in the midst of all this, pressed upon by so many problems demanding fiercely a solution, Gordon had come to find life worth the living, so long as he could hold Katherine's hand and look into her radiant, love-lit eyes.

Emma Gordon's invalid life had never been so filled with interest as now, when each day her brother came



home to tell her of the progress of his work and his love, and of the hopes inspired by both. Emma, in the seclusion of her little room, found herself quite transported by the glowing descriptions of Katherine Webb which Gordon gave her. She was prepared to believe anything of the girl, provided it was fine and good; and never having had a romance of her own, all the suppressed sentiment of her suffering, isolated life budded forth and found expression in this love-affair which was committed in fullest and most sacred confidence to her tender care.

"In the old romances," said Emma, "there were always flowery banks as a background to the lady's charms, and no one ever went wooing except in summer."

"Katherine wears flowers in her hair, as well as against her bodice," replied Gordon, "and we are in the very midst of summer now." Gordon loved to encourage and indulge his sister's fancies, for he realized that they opened to her the only vista through which she might look at the beautiful things of life. Still there were times when he could not talk with her merely of the ideal; when the storm beat upon him and drove him to the wall, he could not withhold from her the actual in its sternest aspect, and she alone had always known the fierceness of the struggle which he had waged. Possibly it was as well, for though anxiety for her brother had often filled Emma Gordon's nights with sleeplessness, yet just because she knew him as no one else did, she had been able to be to him that human stronghold and place of refuge in

times of trouble without which his life could not have continued. She understood this, and, helpless invalid as she was, she felt at times that her life had not been altogether in vain.

"What a wonderful thing all this love and love-making must be!" continued the girl, her pathetic eyes filling with an eager, excited look at the thought.

"Yes," said Gordon, "it is very sweet, and then again it is very bitter."

"Come! now, my boy," said Emma, stroking his hand as was her habit, "while the flowers are blooming and the birds singing, let us think and talk only of the sweet side of it."

"But sometimes," he replied, "I cannot escape from a sense of terrible apprehension, and when I am sure of sympathy, as I am always when with you, this feeling will break forth." There was no concealing the fact that Gordon looked worn, as he spoke; and the girl recalled how fresh and enthusiastic he had been fifteen years before. What a pity, she reflected, that some great love had not come to him then, when he would have rejoiced at being placed in the forefront of the battle. His present words appealed to her personally and acutely, as if they had touched some hidden apprehension of her own; yet her reply was not meant to imply any sinking of the heart or loss of courage; it was only what rang constantly in her ears.

"'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?'" she asked.

"Dear heart!" said Gordon, clasping his sister's

hands with one of his own, while with the other he smoothed her pallid brow.

"Try not to doubt so much," she added.

"At times," he replied, "the inward pain is so great nothing else comes to me."

"The answer is to be found only in submission," she said. Her own life had taught her to look beyond the scene of individual suffering to the larger stage where suffering has its result in perfection. But to Gordon, still battling with human passion and human weakness, this view was not clear, and the cross which his sister bore so calmly, he was unable to clasp in his faltering hands.

In these days Gordon's work took him much to the library, and there, browsing among old papers and forgotten books, many were his moments of inspiration. With the student chance often plays some fortunate pranks. In many a dark hole in a loft, literally covered with the dust of centuries, have slept peacefully masses of documents awaiting their resurrection at some one's life-giving touch. Knowing these things, Gordon browsed on, hoping that his might be the good fortune to fall upon some fresh and stirring subject, such as his genius might be able to appropriate and transform into romance and poetry. Certainly, Gordon reflected, his spirit of inquiry was sincere enough to merit such a reward; and well did his friends know that his was the power, could he but learn to exercise it rightly, of so enveloping the hard, bare facts of life and history in an atmosphere of beauty that they would lose nothing of their original

force or suggestiveness. Naturally, Gordon's serious ambition was to be a poet; other work he regarded merely as a stepping-stone or a practical necessity. Just how much of the essential attribute of poetry---that power of awakening in others sensations like those which animated his own bosom---Gordon possessed, he could not tell, but somewhat of this essential attribute he certainly did possess; and in this lay his great hope of realizing his passionate ambition and passionate love. To the practical mind steeped in worldly wisdom his chance of success seemed slender, almost too vague to be recognized as a chance. William Glascock thought differently. When Gordon had made a full confession to him of all the conditions of his life, Glascock saw that here was no common emergency. The deep and tremulous emotion with which Gordon had spoken made it plain that this time was all-important in his life; and distinctly did Glascock see that it was not a season when any choice was to be exercised as to what tools Gordon was to make use of in his work. Only those tools which he could command and use, be their possibilities ever so slender, had he any right to consider. For such reasons, Glascock encouraged Gordon to do his best along those lines open to his peculiar genius; apprehending that unless he could succeed in such things as were sympathetic to him, all the waves and billows of a life "acquainted with grief" might sweep completely over him and bear him away forever.

With Glascock as his chief friend and adviser, many were the days now that found Gordon slipping quietly

into the rector's study—a place which was becoming more and more the altar of the young clergyman's life. Whenever the opportunity presented itself, Gordon would speak freely of all his difficulties and misgivings, and Glascock met them all with hearty response and healthy advice. Each time that Gordon went to the study he got a clearer light upon Glascock's own life, and the clearer the light the more wonderful this life became to him. Easily depressed and discouraged, and indefinite in aim as had been the greater part of his life, nothing had ever seemed more marvelous to him than the remorseless energy and constant cheerfulness with which Glascock did his work—a work making equal demands upon heart and brain. For the first time Gordon saw what an unflagging will and the habit of a scholarly and concentrated life may do for a man, how it may give him power, and place him in such relations with his fellow men that the influence and control exercised by mere wealth become as nothing in comparison. It was at this time also that Glascock and Gordon formed a habit of walking together—sometimes late in the afternoon, but more frequently at night, when Glascock could lay aside the duties of the day and give himself freely to the enjoyment which exercise and companionship always brought him. During these walks Gordon learned that Glascock looked upon everything in nature with the eye of a poet; a beautiful night, a soft southern breeze, the heavens studded with stars, a wide sweep of landscape—any and all of these, he saw, aroused Glascock's enthusiasm, so that often his eyes would

flash with delight and his face become illuminated with a joyous smile charming to behold. Because these things delighted him so much, human interests made no less of an appeal to Glascock, and this too Gordon soon learned, as sometimes during their walks Glascock would allow himself to be drawn out to talk of his own experiences among men. When such was the case Glascock fascinated his companion by his thrilling and interesting stories, over which he himself laughed heartily at times, when the humor of the situation warranted it.

"You say," remarked Gordon on one of these walks, "that you know nothing of the difficult questions involved in marriage."

"Yes," replied Glascock, "I know nothing; for personally I have not thought of the matter, except to conclude that I should never marry."

"And why?" asked Gordon, in his present frame of mind feeling it strange that any sane, healthy man should reach such a conclusion.

"Well," answered Glascock, "I have never felt a need of it; that's one reason, I suppose. But possibly the surer one," he added gravely, "is that man's imperious need has always seemed to me to be work and not romantic love. Consequently, I have felt that the man who wishes seriously to accomplish the most in the shortest time, places obstacles in his way by marrying. And then," Glascock continued, his countenance becoming unusually thoughtful and severe, "in the case of a clergyman I have always considered

that peculiar reasons exist, making it better for him not to marry."

"Except in regard to the question of money, it seems to me," said Gordon, "that a man is not obliged to consider marriage in relation to his work."

"Yes, that is one view," replied Glascock; "but mine is different. Still, I do not undertake to decide for other men. Work like mine demands of a man all the passion and devotion of which he is capable; and it seems to me that a man can satisfy all the passion and devotion of his nature by dedicating himself wholly to this work."

"Still, after all," said Gordon, "though a man may feel his work to be ultimate, he must certainly experience at times many unfulfilled desires, should he go through life without having known any intimate personal relationship."

"But would not the case be reversed," asked Glascock, "if in the enjoyment of that personal relationship of which you speak, a man lost some of his power and saw his work in the world suffer as the result?"

"While a man's work may demand much of him," said Gordon, "there is no view of it, I think, which justifies all denial to personal happiness. The divine right of happiness is no longer disputed, it seems to me, and a man has a right to all he can get, provided he does not ask a woman to assume practical burdens beyond the limit of her tender endurance." To Gordon, face to face with a stern, practical problem, where dollars and cents alone could turn the balance, the whole matter had resolved itself into one of

finance. Glascock found it fraught with difficulties quite different—difficulties subtle and complicated, which no general law has ever yet solved, nor probably ever will.

“In my case,” Glascock went on saying, “the complexity of the matter seems very great; yet, I fear,” he admitted, “that I have not thought much of it. Certainly, not until lately; and it is your sentimental state, I believe, that has started my thinking of it now.” He smiled with amusement as he spoke, and tenderly linking his arm in that of Gordon, he continued, using again his serious tone:

“Somehow, I feel that to marry would be for me to divide my allegiance, and the result, I fear, would be confusion, so that the end of this man would be worse than the beginning.” He ended in a jesting tone, then turned the conversation to something less personal. Later at night, however, when alone in his study, the conversation came back to him, and he was forced to ask himself some questions. What is allegiance—spiritual allegiance? And how does a man best perform God’s work in the world—by accepting every condition that will develop most fully the man himself, or by hedging himself around with certain laws, compelling obedience to them, and like St. Paul buffeting the body into submission? Up to the present time he had answered these questions by scarcely daring to ask them; putting himself, by the directness with which he drove forward, above and beyond them. He knew well that in him was that human element common to all men which would call upon him some



day to make a decision. When the call came what should he do?—decide as priest or as a man; allow the order or the individual to be supreme? After some reflection he forced these questions from him and went back to his work, but mingled with it were strange thoughts and stranger visions, and the inexplicable question ringing in his ears: “But if a woman love a man, has he a right to crush her, to break her on the wheel of his ambition, be that ambition what it may, worldly success or spiritual perfection?”

While Glascock and Gordon were cementing their friendship by long walks and long talks together, Agnes Carlton was abiding quietly at Edgewood, not daring yet to make another trip into Plantersville, lest she might meet Glascock. Occasionally she and the Major made fresh excursions into the country surrounding Edgewood; with this exception Agnes seemed entirely engaged with matters on her own estate. Yet these days were very full of reflection, and Agnes was also putting into them some substantial reading on economic and social subjects. Important plans regarding her future life were maturing in her mind, and she lay fallow, as it were, nature doing for her more and better than she could have done for herself. Yet the harvest was not to be just now; the ground demanded further tillage, and Agnes, though she reached forth her hands eagerly, was not quite ready for her work in the world.

That she would not go on simply like other girls, buying pretty clothes and availing herself of the social pleasures naturally hers, aroused Miss Rachel's ire

more than she liked to admit even to herself. Miss Rachel wished Agnes to marry and settle down; that in the old lady's opinion was the only thing for her niece to do. Possibly, Miss Rachel wished marriage so earnestly for Agnes, because she believed she had missed in her own life of single blessedness that happiness which is the due of every woman. But while advocating marriage for Agnes, nothing could ever reconcile her to David Alexander as Agnes's husband, and in the hope that the girl's new pursuits might discourage this purposed marriage, Miss Rachel had, as we have seen, yielded a silent acquiescence. Still, Miss Rachel's mind was greatly perplexed, and her grievances seemed heavier than one of her age should be called upon to bear alone. When Mrs. Webb paid her next visit to Edgewood, Miss Rachel poured forth all her family troubles, using no little invective.

"It seems to me," she said, "that nowadays people have a downright mania for organization and experiment."

"It does look," replied Mrs. Webb, "as if many people were seeking a thought or an emotion capable of dominating them."

"Now, here is Agnes," Miss Rachel continued, "wanting to start something out here for the country people. Of course, she doesn't know what she wants, only it must be something in the way of an experiment."

"Well, ours is an age of fads," responded Mrs. Webb.

"Everybody wants to start something," said Miss

Rachel with vehemence. "Everybody is interested in some kind of will-o'-the-wisp; so that I believe," her vehemence increasing, "it is true that half the people in the world who gain distinction do so by starting a so-called 'movement,' and getting a following that will sneeze every time they take snuff."

"Possibly," replied Mrs. Webb, "they are inspired by the example of that flying multitude which Dante found this side of the Styx, chasing every banner that rose." And so wit sharpened against wit, each lady wondering at the keenness and aptness of the other, the conversation went on, Miss Rachel and Mrs. Webb passing a delightful afternoon in human vivisection.

## CHAPTER XI.

ON a marvelously beautiful morning in September, when the air seemed overflowing with abundant life, David Alexander came back to town laden with the fruits of his summer expedition. Judging by results, Alexander had abated none of his usual vigor and earnestness during his absence from Plantersville. During several weeks he had made a most satisfactory trial of his method of work, and now his long writing table was covered with notes and memoranda, all important and related to the great undertaking to which he had dedicated his powers. As he sat contemplating his vast amount of material and congratulating himself that he was quite equal to the task of transforming it into current coin, Mrs. Webb and Dr. Hogan were talking together, discussing freely David Alexander's talents and possibilities.

"So he is back in town?" said Mrs. Webb.

"Yes," replied the Doctor, "and as full of notes and elaborate detail as ever."

"What a pity that man will so get himself up for the occasion."

"Indeed, yes, and now he will commence delving again in his own mind, so that we shall miss everything direct and simple he might naturally give us."

"A little ease, or indifference of manner," said Mrs. Webb, "would do worlds for Alexander."

"Far too self-conscious," continued the Doctor. "Whatever fire is there is quenched at once."

"I should like," said Mrs. Webb eagerly, "to hit upon something that would give his mind a wholesome shock, so that it might emit a few electric sparks."

"You are much too ambitious, my dear Mrs. Webb. There are as many methods in men as there are moods and tempers, and Alexander, no doubt, follows the manner native to him, doing the best possible."

"True as that may be," replied the lady, "no amount of charitable consideration can make one enjoy an artificial product, such as Alexander's writings, or as the Sunday sermons we usually hear."

"Why not include newspaper editorials?"

"Because my penetration is only of the quality of iron, while yours is of steel, and so always cuts deeper, nearer the heart of things."

"How you women do cultivate the art of conversation at the expense of truth!" exclaimed the Doctor, pleased, however, at Mrs. Webb's words, and convinced that no girl of his acquaintance possessed an independent grace and charm equal to hers. The Doctor liked his fruit mature and mellow, and conversation that had color and flavor, and that abounded in wisdom, interested him far more than did the ebullitions of a half-formed, unripe mind, no matter what the eagerness and joyousness of such a mind.

Alexander spent the morning after his return to

Plantersville shut within his own room, absorbed in his notes and papers; but the evening found him at Edgewood, walking beneath the trees with Agnes. Despite her perplexed state of mind, Agnes had found the day then drawing to a close a glorious one. Autumn, a time that filled her with sad but delightful memories, had already begun to make itself felt; the days were mild, still, and almost cloudless. To-day had been one for almost any pastime, a day in which one might walk or sit still with equal delight—a long feast of beauty, and it was now coming to a perfect conclusion, as if Nature herself were setting her benediction upon the hours. Venus hung low in the west, the full moon was showing its rim above the trees in the east, while out in the darkening fields could be heard many an evening song. For Agnes the beauty of the day was complete. Filled with this sense of enjoyment she could afford to be generous and forgive Alexander the discord which his presence brought into the situation. Surely, she reflected, the scene all about her and all the pleasure she took in it should be a means of grace to her, helping her through the interview she must have with him.

“So you have got some splendid work done?” she said after listening to Alexander’s account of what he had been able to perform.

“Yes,” he replied, “I have brought back a great wealth of notes transcribed from original sources. Their value is inestimable.”

“So now you can go forward I suppose, and complete your history.”

"Yes," he replied, "after some further revision of what has already been done. And then," he added, "we can be married, and that life in which there is to be no halting on the road to success, will begin for both of us."

It is undoubtedly true that all the world loves a lover and will frankly admit it, yet it must be a lover who does not love self. In the kingdom of romance self-love is the unpardonable sin, and therein lay Alexander's failure to charm. He had fallen in love with his own image, and not with Agnes as she really was. He expected her to give him back his own ideas and methods, and it was therefore impossible that his love-making should not take on a cheerless phase. After weeks of absence he came to her cool as usual, speaking first of his work and then of his ambition, without a word of inquiry as to her health and happiness. Perplexed as she was over her own affairs, she could not repress a smile at Alexander's conduct, especially as she remembered that an old chronicle had imputed to a woman the invention of the art of kissing; the woman in question being doubtless driven to such an extremity in the hope of arousing an emotionless lover.

But what she said was:

"I have been altering a great many things while you have been away—my views and plans—and I do not see how our marriage can ever come off."

"What!" he exclaimed, in a tone of greater surprise than his self-possession of the moment before would have seemed to justify.

Then Agnes told him of all her rides and walks

over the country with the Major, entering into some details as to the condition of the people she saw and of the impression made upon her own mind. She did not, however, tell him anything of the beginning, inspired as it had been by Glascock's words, or of the effect Glascock's preaching had produced upon her. Even had she felt that a knowledge of these things belonged by right to Alexander, she could not have spoken of them to him or to any one. She did not feel that she owed him any confession as to her inner life, except so far as was necessary for him to understand the outward change in her. She had never pretended to be in love with him; she had never expressed any sentiment for him; she had never undertaken to lay her heart bare before him. For reasons that seemed good to her she had consented to marry him, and she had tried to keep faith with this promise. Her own sense of honor and Alexander's demanded this of her. But since her point of view had changed, she stood on different ground from where she had stood a few months before. She must get her freedom back, and work out her life along different lines from those Alexander wished her to follow.

"I begin to fear," she said, "that my whole past life has been covered by an idle dream."

"But to advocate this dream as a thoroughly serious and practical plan," he insisted, "as a workable idea, is only to carry it to its logical conclusion."

"The obstacle to be overcome," she replied, "is this social idea which I have got into my head. In the past I have lived for things, have believed in things;



now I see that instead of things it should be men. The human being and human need are of supreme importance."

"If you undertake," he said, "to follow any such faith and give up for it the work which your talents clearly define as your work, you will only squander your life."

"Yet," she answered, "it is becoming to me an altogether significant and compelling idea, and as I dwell upon it I am filled at once with hope and despair."

"But you must not dwell upon it," he protested.

"Merely to tell me that avails nothing. And even should I tell myself the same thing the result would not be different. The idea has taken too deep hold to be lightly uprooted now. And," she continued eagerly, "you speak of my squandering my life. The world over it is the same; rich and poor alike are squandering nothing so remorselessly as this very thing, their best possession—life itself. Such being the case, should not the few who see things differently, who feel that life can be spent beautifully and wisely, come to the rescue and by sacrificing somewhat their individual aims point out the better way to those sorely in need of it?"

"Well, if this must be," he asked, "why not as a writer? What obstacle is there to that?"

"With me," she replied, "the question is, how can one come into the largest good for himself and also render the most genuine social service?"

"In your case there can certainly be no doubt as to

the answer. The answer is to be found in using your best gifts in the best manner."

"But," she replied, "ours is not an age of independent thought; if it were, what you suggest might be realized. If I write and succeed, as you count success, I must give out a stock opinion; that is what the market demands. The moment I become vigorously and independently myself, that moment I shall be met by hisses and scorn—which certainly is not the way to get the largest good for ourselves or to render the most genuine social service."

"Then what is your answer to the question?" he asked in perplexity.

"By giving oneself," she replied eagerly; "one's time, talents, money, to some kind of individual work among such people as you find needy and in want at your very door, or anywhere along the way through life."

"As a plan of life," he said, "that, I suspect, will be more easily formulated than followed."

"It is merely," she replied, "the practical carrying out of our best ideals—the most direct way, it seems to me, of increasing excellence and beauty in the world."

"Then you will not give up this new plan?" he asked with some bitterness of tone.

"I do not see how I can," she replied, "for surely it would now mean for me the death of the spirit."

"Then I shall expect you," he said, with quiet, unhesitating determination, "to enlarge the plan to the extent that it may include me." He became very

serious and pale as he continued: "I confess, Agnes that I prefer you the other way, as you were six months ago; other pursuits than the ones you now choose are congenial to me, but I accept the change in you, for I cannot and will not give you up."

"What is this?" she asked almost fiercely. "Is it love, or determination to carry your point?" She knew well that he was the most inflexible person she had ever met, that his was an iron will, impossible to move when once fixed by a principle or a purpose. A strong excitement possessed Agnes as she found herself face to face with him in battle array. She was sufficient mistress of herself to keep from any loud or unseemly demonstration, yet her excitement but increased as she perceived Alexander's usual self-consciousness vanish for the moment. Certainly nothing had ever so taken her by surprise and upset all her calculations as his present conduct and words.

"Agnes, you will break my heart," he said, and for the first time in their acquaintance he did not seem to choose his words or think about his thoughts. She could see that he too, like herself, was possessed by a tremendous excitement, but that it was reined in by his wonderful will. His words necessarily told upon Agnes. She had not been prepared for anything like this, and the delicacy of her own passion for Glascock, as well as the subtlety of her own feeling, made her just then more than ordinarily impressionable. Though never a passive instrument upon which influences might play, Agnes was almost preternaturally responsive to any suffering in another which seemed

to be genuine and intense; therefore Alexander's unexpected words and manner struck those chords of sympathy which lay hidden within her nature.

"It never occurred to me that you would care like that," she said, and he could tell from her quivering voice that he had disarmed her and held her obedient to his will.

"Then you will not throw me over?" he pleaded, his excitement thoroughly in hand by this time, but stirring and stimulating him to an unusual degree of ardor.

"I suppose I cannot," she admitted, more in a tone of despair than of gladness.

"Follow your own plan, work it out your own way," he said, "only keep your promise to me. That now is all I ask." His pride had certainly had a fall, yet he felt that he could not yield, and at that moment Agnes seemed more essential to him than any part of the scheme he had mapped out for himself. He had spoken sincerely when he said that she would break his heart, but the loss of her had for him a practical meaning which Agnes did not for the moment suspect. She was to be the crown, as it were, to all his labor, and Edgewood the realm in which he was to reign; without these possibilities his future looked to him desolate indeed. Merely to write his book and take his place in the list of authors, already over-crowded by men of no estate like himself, was not the goal upon which he had fixed his longing eyes; merely to attain to this was not what he had labored for incessantly, night and day, the past five years. His book was to

be but the stepping-stone upon which he was to mount to higher things ; his distinction as a man of letters, as an historian most careful and researchful, was to prove the open door through which he was to pass to an assured position in the world of comfort and ease. To fail in part was for him to fail altogether. He must complete his scheme as he had conceived it ; nothing short of this would be the success to which he aspired, and to miss that success was to miss all that made life valuable to him or effort praiseworthy. It did, therefore, seem to him that the loss of Agnes Carlton and all she represented would crush him completely ; especially at this time, when he began to feel that he might not be very far from that point at which he was to reap the reward of his many years of patient toil.

"If I try," said Agnes, after some moments of silent thought, "to keep my promise, you must not discourage me in my new work." Had she been less sensitive about giving pain she would have ended, then and there, all relationship between Alexander and herself. To continue the relationship upon the footing indicated was to attempt an impossibility, as Alexander's next words made plain.

"In time you will be sure to come back to the old aims and the old ways," he said, adding : "Together we will work it out."

"Do not think of anything like that," she replied. "I shall never come back."

"Let us speak of other things now," he said, and directing the conversation along channels agreeable

and interesting to himself he passed another hour with Agnes.

When finally Alexander had gone and left Agnes alone, she realized that she was face to face with her own folly. Why had she acted as she had done? She well knew that Alexander could never comprehend the struggle and the agonies of a soul that craves the light as did hers; that his mind could never mirror a world of sunshine and freshness such as that which delighted her: there was nothing in him that could make these things clear to him. Yet she had allowed him to continue his hold upon her, foolishly, wantonly almost, it seemed to her when his compelling presence had been withdrawn and she stood alone and helpless, considering the state in which she had placed herself. Whither she should turn she knew not. She stood appalled, frightened, almost overwhelmed by the darkness and the mystery about her. She knew that she had permitted herself to be subdued, submerged, as it were, by Alexander's indomitable will. She saw that she had acted according to the dictates of an artificial conscience, instead of according to the sound, healthy one which usually guided her. Certainly she owed Alexander no obligation commensurate with that which she owed her own soul. Yet she had bowed before his demand and neglected that of her own soul. Her convictions were strong enough—this was clear; yet beneath that constraining influence which Alexander exercised over her, as he did over others when he sought to do so, she had not taken the more daring course, as she should have done. All of these things

she saw plainly; but for the time being felt herself helpless before the situation. It seemed to involve more than she could manage or control; she who had always been able to act so freely, according to her own choice. From the first she had been peculiarly powerless before the persistency and determination which Alexander brought to bear upon her; but now there was added a more subtle influence—one which she recognized yet scarcely dared acknowledge. Possibly in Alexander was to be found a refuge from herself, from that strange pain which had already commenced to gnaw incessantly at her heart. She must, she reflected, have lost her mental balance to allow Glascock, who scarcely thought of her, so to impress her that she could suffer when she thought of him, and long to renew all the visions and ideals of her youth. Better a hundred times to hold by her promise to Alexander, to anchor herself on that, than to be engulfed by an unjustifiable love and swept away in its irresistible swell!

When a girl just on the point of womanhood Agnes had learned what it meant to be desolate and alone, to have the heart torn asunder. She had passed safe through that time, many hopes being yet left to be cherished and perchance fulfilled. Life was then largely still a blank page awaiting the writing that was to fill it. Now everything was different. She had lived through her illusions, and while her imagination was still vivid and strong—a great influence in her life—she knew that the fire in her would burn out and leave nothing behind should there be a mistake made again

in the arousing of her affections. When she stood confronted with this possibility it was not strange that her vision became clouded, the world less beautiful than she usually found it, and her heart more solitary than she had ever known it.

That night Agnes walked a long while alone beneath the trees. "How," she asked herself again and again, "am I to get a clearer conception of the truth?"

"I seem," she said at another moment, "less able to understand things now than when I was younger."

These and other unfathomable questions found no answer just then, nor was it of as much importance that they should, as Agnes felt it to be. No answer came; yet a larger idea of life in all its relations was growing in her mind, and nothing was helping its growth more than her present bitter experience. A clearer conception of truth could afford to wait. Added knowledge, a wider vision, the soul further enlarged and enriched—these things were of first importance, after which, such revelation as the situation should demand. Agnes was to learn fully what she knew at present only in part—that there is no patent device for bringing about higher spiritual conditions. As Glascock had said to Archibald Gordon, whatever betterment the soul is capable of must come through the slow workings of the same forces which have always tended for righteousness and always will. This Agnes was to realize in her own life, as every one who makes genuine progress realizes sooner or later.

When Alexander had returned to his lodging he found Dr. Hogan poring over an old volume of songs,



most of them entirely unknown to the present generation. The Doctor had found the book in an out-of-the-way auction house which he was in the habit of frequenting in the pursuit of his antiquarian tastes. It was wonderful how these almost forgotten airs recalled the past to him, often with the memory of those who had sung them, or the circumstances surrounding the time when they were popular. Many of them were old southern songs, sung all over Dixie in the sixties, and the Doctor felt a strange thrill pass through him as he remembered how these songs had once called forth loud hurrahs for the flag now banished and furled for all time. While Alexander was examining the book, the Doctor said:

“Songs, like dogs, have their day.”

“For the purposes of reminiscence the old ones are often valuable, I should think,” said Alexander.

“Yes,” replied the Doctor. “For instance, should Miss Rachel Carlton sit down to the piano, and turning the leaves of this book wander abstractedly through some of these old songs, you would find her turning instinctively to those of the earlier period; while Mrs. Winifred Webb would make her selections from those in vogue a little later. In each case you have the lady’s age very nearly by the songs selected, each one choosing those most popular when she was a girl.”

“What a clever old fellow!” exclaimed Alexander.

“The old fellows,” replied the Doctor, “are the only ones now who have time for the enjoyment of mental

devices or dreams. You young, practical men are too busy turning your air-castles into solid rock."

"Certainly," replied Alexander, "the stress and strain of modern life leave no time to meditate among the tombs." Absorption in the present, in present duties and present interests, seemed to him more important than ever, now that his talk with Agnes had convinced him of the insecurity of his ground. The old books and relics of early times with which the Doctor had surrounded himself were of little interest to Alexander. What he wanted was a means of working out his plan of life, complete in every detail, and what did not contribute to that did not enlist his sympathy.

Continuing their conversation, Dr. Hogan replied:

"While what you say has truth in it, there is still something to be said for the people who are not working themselves to death in a desperate effort to out-shine one another."

"The requirements of success are inexorable," replied Alexander; "nothing goes through without strenuous and persistent labor."

"And yet spontaneous acts tell tremendously when the sum total of life is made."

"My ideal man," said Alexander, thinking his own thoughts aloud, "is he who strives in the present not only to master the business or profession in which he is engaged, but also to make of every success in its pursuit a stepping-stone upon which to rise to wealth, to professional distinction and social advancement."

"Take my advice, Alexander," said the Doctor.

"Go away for a while and seek the social repose of those old, long-established countries where men still follow their fathers' trades, as they take their fathers' names. There is more in some old-fashioned ideas," the Doctor added somewhat sadly, "than you self-complacent young critics imagine."

"Your ideas, Doctor, were formed in an age when wealth, leisure, culture, and all the good things of life were confined to a class. All of that drooped and withered with the advent of modern democracy. Now the race is to the swift and the battle to the strong."

"I would not block the way," replied the Doctor, "to any change that is a real improvement. I only wish to be sure that we possess the genuine article when we compliment ourselves upon our present good sense."

Nothing the Doctor had to say, however, touched Alexander in his present state of mind. That iron rule of life which had long been his guide he was determined to extend still further. Until he reached the point he had fixed for his ambition, he would turn his back persistently upon all the beguilements of fleeting pleasure, counting as lost the day which added nothing to his labor accomplished. In everything he would exercise an unfaltering power of self-denial. The dominant idea of his life should triumph! He would become the master of his own circumstances! Braced and encouraged by such resolves Alexander fell asleep to waken the next morning only at the sound of Mrs. Walworth's robust voice, urging her domestics to more orderly ways and keener powers of observation, both of which requests were justified by the noise and dust ever present in that good woman's house.

## CHAPTER XII.

THESE September days found Glascock very much consumed by his plans, and, if possible, more ardent than ever to carry them through. His main idea was to open wide the doors of old St. Stephen's to the poor, the friendless and the tempted. In order to accomplish this it was necessary to change the church's plan of action in many respects, to enlarge its capacity for work, and so to add to its institutions as to make it a center of influence in that part of the town where it was located. Even in the short time that Glascock had resided in Plantersville the St. Stephen's neighborhood was constantly increasing its population. Young men and women were continually coming in great numbers from the country districts to Plantersville to join in the struggle there for a livelihood; and these drifted mostly to the down-town region where board was cheap. The result was, these young people were often crowded indiscriminately into small houses where dirt and unsanitary conditions reigned. Glascock's hope was that St. Stephen's might be made to stand shoulder to shoulder in the way of attractions with the saloons surrounding it on all sides, and that it might also offer a substitute for the allurements which naturally drew the young girls of the neighborhood from their poor,

unlovely homes into the streets. With these things in mind, Glascock exerted all his moral fervor to touch the instincts and the ideas common to the people about him, for unless he could find a response in their better natures, he could not hope to exercise any influence over their lives.

Glascock had spoken to Dr. Hogan of his desire for a parish house, the erection of which was his ultimate aim. His thought was that a parish house could be made the center from which would flow influences capable of infusing faith and purpose into the hopeless mass, prompting its members to improve their own environment as well as their individual lives. The parish house should serve all the purposes of a social settlement, and more besides; because there would go forth from it Christian as well as social influence. When he should get his house, Glascock hoped to establish in it a free kindergarten, a free library, a free dispensary, besides a free gymnasium and classes for industrial and mechanical instruction. It would probably take years to work out this idea in Plantersville, and it was therefore necessary to go slowly, making no false step, willing to achieve from day to day the little that might be possible. When once aroused in regard to a subject, Glascock became possessed by a very passion of enthusiasm, and he chafed terribly at times beneath the restraints which hedged him in. His earnestness and hopefulness, however, were great and gradually he won friends for his cause, so much so that he dared to talk openly of his plan for establishing more human relations between the church and the

people in its vicinity. He was just now on the point of introducing an innovation calculated to arouse the opposition of many, and the comment of all.

The St. Stephen's rectory, which had been built in the days when the old church was the center of fashion, was large and spacious, with broad halls and massive walls, a building ready for a dozen practical purposes, and likely, with the old church itself, to out-last every structure in the neighborhood. After much consultation, Glascock had obtained the privilege of opening some of the closed rooms in the rectory to be used in connection with his work. In one he placed tables, chairs and books, making of it a reading-room for the public, a second he was transforming into a temporary gymnasium, while a third he was turning into a class and assembly room, where instruction might be given, or informal lectures, or simple entertainments.

"Money," he said, "has its part in this work—it makes the work possible. But the chief thing is to establish human relationships between the lower and higher classes of society. Merely to clothe and feed the poor and degraded is nothing in itself. They must be made to feel that all in this world are children of the same God."

Of course, in a place like Plantersville, there was no great mass of people hopelessly apathetic like the poor of New York and Chicago; yet even there the separation was a wide one between the poor of the down-town region and the privileged class of the West End. Naturally, there was much aristocratic prejudice in Plantersville; the better people were ready to render

material help of any sort, but they did not take kindly to Glascock's idea of establishing friendships between the privileged and the unprivileged. Among certain ones his ideas were beginning to stir the fires of discontent and criticism; the newspapers discussed him and his work; while rash souls, like Miss Fitzgerald, were inclined to raise a storm concerning his theories and methods. Glascock, however, went quietly and determinedly about his work of getting ready the rectory rooms for the uses to which he had dedicated them, taking no part in the controversy which he had set in motion in certain quarters.

One important thing was likely to help him very materially, possibly proving the bridge that was to carry him safely over on the other side. As he had said to Agnes Carlton, he was born and bred in Virginia, and was therefore no outsider, no alien, introducing himself and his foreign views into the old community. His father before him had been a clergyman, he had uncles and cousins following the same calling, all, it would seem from reports, men made of stern, good stuff, with iron in their blood and fire in their veins; men of high personal attainments and high ideals, of keen wit and delicate sensibilities; but always earnest and consistent churchmen. Such things as these were apt to weigh heavily in his favor, especially when people began to appreciate that Glascock was giving himself up heart and soul to the hardships of a lonely life. Soon it began to be whispered about that he had sacrificed his personal tastes and comfort to come back to his native State and to perform there, on

very poor pay, his self-appointed task. Of course, all this was interesting, and the women commenced to speak of him as one of God's noblemen. So while criticised on the one hand, he was flattered on the other, and would undoubtedly have been spoiled had he not been too busy with the purposes of his life to see what was going on around him. Possibly too, that stern, good stuff of which his race was made helped him at this time, keeping his head clear and his heart true.

When first Glascock commenced to arrange his newly opened rooms at the rectory, he stood quite alone in the undertaking. One day, however, after he had been engaged about a week in the work, there appeared in the rooms a quiet-looking little lady, between fifty and sixty years of age, with a voice so kind that one felt it could control the rudest and the most violent. This little lady was Miss Jane Summers, of whom Glascock knew something already, but whom, up to this time, he had had little occasion to meet. The fact was, Miss Summers, whose whole life had been but the expression of the one comprehensive purpose of helping mankind, had stood quietly aside after Glascock came to Plantersville, waiting for the full measure of the man to reveal itself. When finally she became satisfied as to the quality of the work he purposed doing, she walked boldly to his side, and taking her stand there became in all things his chief co-laborer and friend. Soon he realized that a tower of strength had been added to him and his cause. Miss Jane's tact amounted to genius; she was prolific in sugges-



tions, and if one failed could substitute another with such rapidity as to obliterate the memory of the first. If Glascock was something of a Christian socialist, she was a Christian idealist, a woman of intellect, sustained and borne on by the force of the loftiest ideals; one in whose breast hope seemed to spring eternal. Naturally, it was not long before Glascock came to watch with eagerness for the daily appearance of the quiet little figure in its neat and tasteful apparel—the apparel, one might almost say, of a delicate, high-bred Quaker. No woman whom Glascock had ever known had been made on just the plan of Miss Jane Summers. Surely, he thought within himself, no knight of old or modern times was ever more “without fear and without reproach” than was this quiet little lady who went about everywhere in Plantersville doing good.

Miss Jane, like Glascock and others interested in the same subject, had her theories about the poor and the best way to help them.

“While organized benevolence puts opportunity within their reach,” she said, “personal influence, sympathy and instruction alone can induce them to make use of it.”

“The blind hatred of the poor for the rich will never be overcome,” replied Glascock, “until the hand stretched out in proffered help has in it something more than money—until it is the hand not of a society, but of an individual, of a friend, a brother.”

“It ought not to be expected,” said Miss Jane, “that the poor should be eager to avail themselves of the opportunities offered them for better living.”

She and Glascock were working together among the books which had been collected for the Free Library which on the next day was to be thrown open to the Plantersville public, especially to that of St. Stephen's parish.

"Their ignorance keeps them indifferent," replied Glascock, "and only patient persistence can awaken in them any desire to better themselves by their own efforts."

"The general improvidence of the poor and their inability to make the most of the little money upon which they must live is the most perplexing side of the question."

"I appreciate that," he replied, "for everywhere I find people living in utmost wretchedness, suffering oftentimes from both hunger and cold, who will yet spend the first money which comes into their possession for some entirely superfluous and useless thing."

"The old story of being able to get on without the necessities of life, but not without the luxuries. Foolish as is the tendency, it is almost impossible to correct it."

"Nothing is more important—I should say, scarcely so important—to the poor as that they should learn the values of living. Let a family have its eyes opened to the facts that dirt and disorder are positive evils, like cold and hunger; that there is a way to buy, to make and to mend; that fresh air and cleanliness bring health and happiness—in short, eliminate the shiftless, thriftless home and you have done more than half

toward the intellectual and moral regeneracy of that family."

"Yet, in the midst of much improvidence and indifference," replied Miss Jane, "one finds sometimes heroic souls. For instance, last winter I became interested in a frai*i* old woman living across the town from here in one poor, bare room, where she did all of her work and carried on the trade of plain sewing. Her special need seemed to be fuel, so I obtained a load of coal for her and had it stored away in a convenient spot, with the injunction that she was to use it freely. Shortly after that I went to see how she was getting on, and found her as formerly sitting over a meager, half-fed fire.

" 'Now, Miss Lampkin,' I said, 'why do you not use that coal I sent you?'

" 'I am saving it up,' she said, 'for harder weather than this.'

" 'But you have not the constitution,' I protested, 'to sit here sewing all day, in this half-heated room.'

" 'Law! Miss Jane,' she replied, 'tain't the constitution that does it, 'tis the resolution.' And I am sure," added Miss Jane, "that it was the resolution in her case which took her successfully through the winter on that one load of coal."

And so the two together, the young man with much of life before him and the old lady with the best of it behind her, labored on in these days, getting things in order for the coming winter, talking of the social conditions in Plantersville and of the possibilities of improvements here and there. Every nook and corner

of the old town was known intimately to Miss Jane, who for thirty years had spent her strength upon its needs. Her thorough knowledge of the situation and her abundant suggestions were just the aids required by Glascock, and so he rejoiced in her as a blessing sent direct from God. Nor did the young clergyman rejoice in his co-laborer more abundantly than she rejoiced in him. Like Glascock, Miss Jane Summers was a native product, through successive generations, and the love of her own people was with her an inborn passion. From early childhood she had maintained a strenuous life, enjoying above everything the labor and sacrifices which she undertook for others. When, therefore, she discovered that there had come to Plantersville a vigorous young man, filled with zeal and eager to spend it in behalf of an enlarged life for the old town, Miss Jane took her place naturally by his side and gave him the hand of fellowship, entering heart and soul into his plans and purposes.

Tough as was Glascock's physical fibre so intense a strain did he put upon it steadily at this time, that but for intervals of relaxation it would doubtless have shown signs of failing. The fields, the hills and the woods about Plantersville were fast becoming familiar to him, and it was in exploring these that he spent his hours of relaxation, finding that the country disclosed to him, with every fresh survey of it, charms that were delightfully alluring. Sometimes he went about on foot, accompanied by Archibald Gordon, at other times he rode, for he was extremely fond of a horse and an excellent judge of one.

"Out-of-door life means a great deal more than physical health," Glascock often said. "It means moral and intellectual sanity."

Possibly it was this faith put into practise which helped him to hold his own so well while passing through a period of nervous sensitiveness and anxiety. At times, as with all lives, cross-currents seemed to sweep over his life, delusions presented themselves before him, and strange doctrines called for a hearing. Then it was especially that he turned from his books and the sociological questions of the day to the open sky, the woods or the fields, yielding himself to their sedative influence. Thus he was saved from excesses and eccentricities, and from being carried away by the unrealities of faith, or deceived by crude and cheap philosophies.

And yet Glascock was not satisfied with himself. Something delayed the progress he should make, something disquieted his heart. Still, this something took no tangible shape, revealed itself in no clear and distinct outline. He recalled with strange vividness his one afternoon spent some weeks before at Edgewood, and Agnes Carlton as she had looked that other afternoon at the old rectory, while drinking tea with Dr. Hogan and himself. He remembered the very unusual questions which had arisen in his mind that same night, when he had returned alone and stood at his front door, looking into the quiet, silent street. Yet what of all this? These things which had left their impression were only of the hour; far too fleeting to be associated in any way with this feeling in his breast,

that he was not quite so firmly anchored as formerly. And yet there was such inspiration for him in the picture of Edgewood and Agnes, that one afternoon, while making a trip on horseback through the country, he took a round-about course through the woods to the rear of Edgewood, and surprised himself greatly by coming out upon the spacious lawn itself, wooded with its fine old trees. What surprised him still more was that he dismounted and walked toward the house, soon finding himself engaged in conversation with Agnes, her aunt, and Major Burton. The whole atmosphere, it seemed to him, was full of that special charm he remembered so well; here was something to give the hard-working man a moment's pause. The Major appeared to him as essentially lovable and Miss Rachel as the true type of the old-time lady, while Agnes imparted to everything a refreshing sense of enduring pleasure.

"Mr. Glascock," said Agnes, "here is the Major lecturing me because I am not, in his opinion, as ardent a Democrat as I should be."

"The Major," said Miss Rachel, "has had over sixty years of experience in this world, and he likes people who take their politics straight."

"Agnes insists," said the Major, "that the merits of the case have nothing to do with my politics; that I am what I am by inheritance, instinct, and training."

"Had circumstances been different," continued Agnes, "he would have been, I am sure, just as ardent a Republican as he is now a Democrat."

"Certainly Miss Agnes cannot be accused of being a partisan," said Glascock.

"You see," Agnes replied, "Aunt and the Major believe so firmly in only one side of the question, that I have to cultivate a judicial rather than a prejudiced point of view."

"Yes," Miss Rachel admitted, "I am of the old school, believing at times that there is no other side, and always what Dr. Johnson would call 'a good hater.'"

"One of my favorite theories," said the Major, "is that every human life should contain three things: common sense, uncommon sense, and nonsense. Now that statement about being always 'a good hater' is part of Miss Rachel's nonsense."

"Not at all!" protested Miss Rachel. "Now Agnes's ideal of a noble existence is one replete with love and service; while I prefer to shatter falsehood and show the poet that the frail fabric of his dreams will never shape itself into brick and mortar."

In her young days it used to be said that no girl in the South equaled Miss Rachel in her ability to ride to hounds and take all obstacles as though they were ant-hills. The spirit of the old lady justified even now this report, making one think it altogether probable that many had been the times when she had come in "at the death," flushed and almost beautiful with the excitement of the chase.

"The dash of bitterness in Aunt's remarks must not be taken too seriously," said Agnes, gathering the old

lady's hand in hers, as was her habit, and stroking it tenderly.

"And yet," replied Miss Rachel, "this bitterness, which Agnes tries to deny, is genuine; and nothing stirs it so much as a glimpse of those delusions with which people flatter and mislead themselves. Besides," she added, speaking more slowly and thoughtfully than usual with her, "Agnes can never remember that I belong to that generation of men and women who, when they saw the issue of our civil war, gave up their faith in God, but not in the cause. If she would but remember this, she would see that I have reason for being 'a good hater,' for maintaining a prejudiced point of view. To the young or even the middle-aged now all of this is, of course, a sealed book," Miss Rachel added in conclusion.

"I know," said Glascock, intensely interested in Miss Rachel and all she had to say, "how you men and women of those days loved the old social order."

"And yet to think," replied Miss Rachel, "that it is as dead now as the cause of the Stuarts!"

"They who came crushed and impoverished out of the great struggle know what it means," said the Major, "to sacrifice everything to a patriotic ideal. Their cause seems none the less sacred because they know it to be irrevocably lost. Then how," he asked, "can we old people be expected to toss up our hats and vote for the Republican party, when it was that party that vanquished us and then for many bitter years oppressed us?"

"Therefore," continued Miss Rachel, "I, for one,



prefer the waving of the bloody shirt to the flaunting of the olive-branch."

"And yet," said Agnes, "I feel sure that all these things which have happened to us as a people have been necessary—educating us for our share in the larger citizenship."

"In a word," said Glascock, "national patriotism must outgrow local patriotism, even in the South."

"It is all well enough," said Miss Rachel in distinct tones, "for you and Agnes to talk of national patriotism; but I wish, if you please, to die as I have lived—simply a Virginian, born and bred."

"And yet," replied Glascock, "we are justified, I believe, in hoping great things for our national life."

"However that may be, I am sure," retorted Miss Rachel, "that even the most ardent admirers of the American touch must admit that it does not always adorn. And as for our civil war," she added with zest, "the result proved nothing but what we knew already—that Providence is always on the side of the big battalions."

Before going away Glascock asked Agnes to walk with him about the grounds, so that he might see something more of all those charms which the Major had pointed out to him that other afternoon when he had been there. By this time the autumn was making itself distinctly felt, and the great wealth of roses which had previously adorned Edgewood had vanished. Yet there were chrysanthemums and cosmos in abundance, and the old place was still beautiful enough, even with decay at hand. About the grounds and across the

fields Agnes and Grascoek walked, each conscious, in a measure, of what it meant for them to walk and talk together in the quiet, assured manner of old friends. Walking on, they finally came to a little wood of silver birches, growing beside a small stream which made its way through the Edgewood lands. Just beyond the birches a mossy terrace was raised two feet or more above the water of a long, still pool. They stood looking down into the pool, silent for some moments.

"Isn't it strange that after all these years," asked Agnes, "Aunt Rachel feels as she does?"

"The positive conclusions which people often draw from their own limited observations," he replied, "are like Lalande's search for God. 'I have searched the universe with my telescope,' said Lalande, 'and I cannot find God.'"

"Then you agree with me," she asked, "in thinking that what has happened was needed to lift us out of an experimental stage, and that our evolution includes much more than would appear on the surface?"

"It is sometimes necessary," he replied, "that other pacts than those of hell should be written in blood; and our future development involves so much, that I dare not speak of it freely. The righteousness of a whole people is at stake, it seems to me," he added with grave seriousness.

"I wish," she said, "that I could catch some glimpse into the future."

"'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him,'" he replied.

They had stood looking into the long, still pool while they talked, but as Glascock finished speaking he turned instinctively and met that brilliant, alightening flash which came at times of deep emotion into Agnes Carlton's beautiful, azure-gray eyes. It was not necessary for them to speak further, nor did they; for Glascock understood at last the meaning of his own disquieted spirit, and Agnes saw that she had unintentionally evoked an emotion equal to her own. The night which followed was spent in anguish by both of them, each fighting to hold firmly to that rule of life which circumstances seemed to prescribe. Yet this new-born passion of theirs was a mighty force, swaying them as they had never before been swayed, and call it what they might—madness, delirium, intoxication—it was sweet as nothing else had been sweet. So while they fought with the one hand to put it aside, unconsciously the other hand was stretched forth to beckon it back. And thus the night passed and the light of a new day broke, but the battle remained yet to be fought to a finish.

## CHAPTER XIII.

WHILE Archibald Gordon's mother was so sweet a saint that she suffered in prayerful silence her son's lapses into intemperance, Mrs. Winifred Webb represented a different order of being, and none knew this better than did Katherine. The lasting youthfulness of Mrs. Webb's spirit rendered that lady equal to any undertaking, and those who shared her environment naturally gave way before so vigorous a character. Katherine did not doubt that, in her case, love could find a way through the tangled mazes surrounding her; none the less she dreaded the effect of her mother's constant and close surveillance. At times she even felt that where her mother was concerned she was a coward altogether. The sweetness of Katherine's disposition was invincible, however, and so storms were prevented in the Webb household. The girl's delight in her own love for Gordon was sufficient to furnish a strong tonic of hope for herself; and while at times, even now, she proved by her skilful use of satire how thoroughly she was her mother's daughter, this satire was mostly of a playful nature, imparting sparkle rather than bitterness to her words. After the manner of all lovers, Katherine and Gordon discerned a striking inferiority in the rest of the world to their own

highly favored selves; so that their relationship brought them genuine happiness, precarious as they both realized this happiness to be.

"Dear heart," said Gordon one day, as they sat talking together, "all of this suspense and uncertainty is very hard to bear—but we have to bear it."

"I have courage and to spare," Katherine replied. "If only the decision rested with myself I should never feel any fear."

"My dearest Love," said Gordon, pressing the girl tenderly to his heart, "I try to believe that this is for the best, and will be seen to be for the best in the end."

"If we can only get safe through this one winter," said Katherine, "I feel that things will come round our way."

"My brave little girl!" replied Gordon. "No one else would bear all this for me. At times I think I must be a very selfish fellow to ask it of you. Yet," he continued, "I know that I desire more earnestly than I ever knew what desiring was, to be wholly yours. If this is not love, then what is love?"

"It is love," answered Katherine. "And I am satisfied, so do not make me unhappy by doubting your own motives."

"Still," he continued, "if I could but have another life of thirty years in this world, how much more beautiful things might be."

"Do not say that, sweetheart, because I am sure I love you better so." Though Gordon felt that he carried a burden heavier than that of most men, her words made music in his soul.

"Let it be this way then, dear heart," he said, to which Katherine responded with fervor; and as the weeks went by the accord of these two on all high things grew more perfect, the expressed feelings and convictions of the one bearing in time a striking resemblance to those of the other.

And yet, with so great an inspiration in his life as Katherine Webb's illimitable love, Gordon could not alter that fitful temperament bestowed upon him by nature. He continued, as formerly, to be uplifted by extravagant hope, then plunged into unreasonable despair. That his heart was torn by the agonies of a love which he could not declare to the world, made things none the less difficult for him. With the passing of the summer days which always pleased his poetic fancy, his power for work diminished. He did not get on, as at first, with his church history; as the passion for Katherine Webb increased in him, his singularly fine and correct judgment in the matter of books seemed to become perverted. Even his faculty for producing poetry failed, when he attempted to apply it to such remunerative subjects as public events and the actions of living men. Gordon's burden was that of a hyper-sensitive brain, of an ultra-emotional temperament; and yet heavier than this was his foreknowledge of his own predisposition to attacks of intemperance—attacks that for long periods disqualified him for the ordinary vocations of life. Since even his love for Katherine Webb, great as it was, could not free him of his burden and apprehensions, it is little wonder that his spirit continued to be hopelessly bowed.

He fought and wrestled far more bravely than most men would have done with the grim monsters that beset him, and many were the times, after being beaten down and crushed, that he struggled to his feet ready to battle with them again. But he was overweighted and handicapped; nature had sent him thus into the world. A charming manner and a distinctive personality won for him love and friends, but not the laurel in the race he was required to run.

If Katherine perceived Gordon's real mental state, no one was the wiser. The more hopeless grew the situation, the more did she assume entire responsibility for it, striving to infuse some of her own hope and courage into her lover's despairing soul. As time passed, it would seem that Katherine had laid her violin permanently aside, so little interest did she show in the subject. She went about the house, however, with more energy and determination than any one had ever seen her exercise; she helped in the housekeeping, took a hand in the family sewing, and in all domestic matters showed a capacity and thoughtfulness unusual as well as unexpected. What had produced this change in her, Katherine herself could not have told. Possibly the girl was restless and nervous, needing an active life; possibly she felt more tenderly toward her mother, whose disapproval her love for Gordon had evoked so strongly. Whatever the cause of the change, the change was there—a very positive one, puzzling to Mrs. Webb as well as to others.

"This thing we call Love is a wonderful thing indeed," Mrs. Webb said one day to Dr. Hogan, when

he had made some reference to Katherine and Archibald Gordon.

"You really think so, do you?" facetiously asked the Doctor.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Webb; "it is responsible for more rash and foolish actions than anything else in the world."

"And yet," replied the Doctor, "it continues in the world—men following women and women following men even after they have eaten of the tree of knowledge."

"There is nothing," continued Mrs. Webb, pursuing her own line of thought, "more worthy of contempt than impecunious, impractical men, who write verses about women but fail to provide their own wives with the comforts of life."

"Possibly," the Doctor replied, "it is about time for us to evolve a *new man*, better planned than the old one."

"Undoubtedly," assented Mrs. Webb; "and I am quite sure if I were permitted to have a voice in the management of public affairs, that I could produce a vast improvement in the masculine type." Mrs. Webb laughed as she spoke, showing that her words were more of a challenge to the Doctor than a serious disapproval of man in general.

"Be not so bold, my lady! You may remember that it has not been very long since woman was a chattel, bought and sold, chastised and slain at the pleasure of her savage father and barbarous husband."

"Even then," replied Mrs. Webb, in the spirit of



banter common to conversation between herself and the Doctor, "though unable to assert herself, woman no doubt knew man for what he was."

"So you believe in the theory," retorted the Doctor, "that when woman ate the apple her eyes were forever opened?"

"You know it has been said, Doctor, that when Eve got hold of the fruit, in spite of Adam's opposition, she discovered at once what a very mean and inferior creature man was, instead of the god-like being he had represented himself. And further, it has been insisted, you know, that if there was any serpent in the Garden of Eden it was man himself, and that the whole trouble arose out of his trying to keep the fruit of the tree of knowledge all to himself."

"But at last," said the Doctor, "we are upon the verge of complete emancipation and equality, so that woman can soon demand her full share of the apples."

"Still, some men tell us that we should really leave all the fruit to man, for it is very indigestible stuff and sure to produce pain when woman has eaten of it."

"The stars in their course fought against Sisera, but such talk as that is fighting against the stars themselves."

"Yes," replied Mrs. Webb, "the apples may be sour, but I dare say woman will never be satisfied until she has the right to eat abundantly of them."

Amusing as Mrs. Webb could be when she would, there were times when she grew serious in speech as in thought. This was so after talking further with Dr. Hogan, who upbraided her for hardness of heart.

"You think me hard, inflexible," she said. "Yes, I am where my children are concerned."

"But once, not so many years ago," pleaded the Doctor in behalf of Katherine, "you were young and in love yourself."

"Yes," she replied, "and in my madness and inexperience I made a romantic marriage, and all my life since I have paid tribute to that one foolish act of my youth." Then growing more grave than the Doctor had ever seen her, Mrs. Webb continued.

"Doctor, when I say that Katherine shall never marry Archibald Gordon with my consent, I say the kindest thing a mother can say. You have no idea what the struggle has been for me these last fifteen years. By constant watchfulness, by managing this, by manœuvring here, by all the wiles of a fertile brain, I have carried my family with great difficulty from year to year, have maintained their respectability and given them a moderately decent life. Katherine has more sweetness than I have, but not half of my pluck. If she should marry Archibald Gordon she would have a life ten times harder than mine has been, and sensitive and amiable as she is, there would be no hope for her. She would go down under it like grass that is mowed by the reaper on a hot summer's day."

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Webb," said the Doctor, and as he spoke he stooped, and with an old-time chivalry kissed the plucky little woman on the cheek.

"Remember," said Mrs. Webb, "the Devil is never so black as he is painted, and if I do seem hard and

worldly, there are reasons for it which I cannot proclaim to the world."

This human touch, this side-light on Mrs. Webb's character, the Doctor valued especially, and ever after her cleverness seemed even more wonderful to him than formerly.

In these days of struggle and hopelessness Gordon turned more and more to William Glascock. Little did he dream that Glascock was then waging as stern a battle as he, though a concealed one. Gordon could not restrain himself. When with Glascock, of whose sympathy he was sure, his passion would break forth into a redundancy of sorrowful words; at times, when physical exhaustion and nervousness made him less master over his dark thoughts, his views of life were poured forth in almost wild expressions. Glascock sympathized and tried to soothe, because he saw that Gordon's suffering was deep and sincere.

"Mine," said Gordon one evening as he and Glascock sat in the latter's study, "is no imaginary pain, no ideal grief. I cannot put it aside."

"But it is such an unsatisfactory, unproductive state, that you should make a most strenuous effort to alter it."

"I am compelled," said Gordon, "to dwell in a world of loneliness where few human voices penetrate."

"But," insisted Glascock, "we have work to do in this world; and I am sure that the work is best done by those minds which are definite, which are not haunted by the sick dreams of an unfound beauty."

"My whole being and love and thought seem to

form themselves after the spirit of the super-sensuous. What to the mass of minds is but a world of shadows is to me the only reality."

"You must fetch your strength from within yourself," said Glascock, "for dependence upon aught external to ourselves leaves us without strength."

Little did Gordon understand at what low ebb was Glascock's own fund of strength at this time, and that he was making tremendous demands upon it and speaking more bravely than the state of his own heart justified.

"Yes, I know," replied Gordon, "every one says the same thing—that life is what we make it. Still, there are delicately organized minds in which a mental error can produce more misery than can crime in coarser minds."

When Gordon had gone away, Glascock sat a long while before his desk, plunged in deep thought. Was it true, he pondered, as Gordon had said, that a fault in the tone of thinking can in some minds produce more misery than can crime in other minds? Was it mental error, fault in the tone of his own thinking, that made the way of life so difficult for him just then? "Walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh" had ever been the rule of his life. His feeling about it had been too hallowed a one for him to speak much of it. It had colored and pervaded his every thought, so that it had become an unceasing presence with him; it lay at the foundation of his every endeavor, and was brought to bear upon every action of his life. Yet now, after years of such a life,

he began to fear that he had surrounded his ideal world with an atmosphere of vague cloud-land. What was it, after all, to "walk in the Spirit?" Was it to put away from him forever, to crush out of existence, this great and wondrous love for Agnes Carlton which had burst upon him like a radiance from heaven? Or was it to accept this love, fully and freely, as a gift from God, assuming without further questioning all responsibility attached thereto? Perplexed by such questions, Glascock cried aloud:

"Oh, that I could grasp those sublime truths which are really the solution of life's mystery!"

Realizing that he must do something active in regard to his present mental excitement, Glascock got up from his desk, and putting on his hat went into the street. As he passed out he could hear unfamiliar sounds of life coming from those rooms which had been recently fitted up and opened to the public. Sore as was his own heart in a personal way, he could but rejoice at those sounds, for they showed that people were already gathering in the rectory rooms and availing themselves of the privileges there offered them. Little as this might seem to some, it was much to him, and made his own burden the easier to bear. Therefore walking on with a somewhat lightened heart, he took his way up-town to test effectually the benefit to be derived from vigorous physical exercise. He had not gone far before he was stopped by Dr. Hogan, who, walking in the direction of St. Stephen's, said that he had been commissioned by Mrs. Webb to find

"this very man, William Glascock, and bring him summarily to her house."

"What is it?" asked Glascock, as he and the Doctor walked on together.

"Nothing," replied the Doctor, "but a fancy of hers that you are working too hard and need to be lectured and set right by no less a personage than Mrs. Webb herself."

"All of which is entirely true," said Mrs. Webb when Glascock repeated the charge in her presence, declaring his belief that it was merely one of Doctor Hogan's fabrications. Without further preliminaries Mrs. Webb plunged into her subject.

"So I see," she said, "that you are not going to take life calmly here in Plantersville as you find it?"

"So long as men have lived," replied Glascock, "I suppose that they have tried to better the things about them."

"Here, however," continued Mrs. Webb, "people usually accept the situation, and try to make themselves as comfortable as possible."

"Yet the purpose of to-day is to change all that," said Glascock; and as he spoke Mrs. Webb could not fail to observe how his appearance and manner arrested the attention of the people gathered for the evening in her drawing-room. It was true that Glascock was a handsome man, such as one could scarcely match in a ten days' journey, and this distinction marked him and set him apart from other men. Naturally, Mrs. Webb's other guests gave up their own efforts at conversation and gathered near him,

"I am liberal enough," said Mrs. Webb, "to look with favor upon any adjustment of relations between social classes, but never upon the obliteration of social distinctions. And the latter," she added, "seems to be the purpose of what we call our modern social movement."

"In a sense that is true," replied Glascock. "People to-day are frankly prospecting for happiness. The social movement, I take it, is a deliberate endeavor on all sides to get more satisfaction out of life than it has yet yielded."

"It seems very strange to us here in Plantersville," said Mrs. Webb, "to see people who used to be considered the rabble making their own appraisal of their social value."

"I am for amusing the rabble on vacant lots, as it were," said Miss Fitzgerald, who, coming into the room just then, drew a chair close to Glascock, and by the vigor with which she spoke indicated her intention of taking a hand in this conversation.

"The situation would be much simpler," remarked the Doctor, "if these people would only keep their hands off the ship of State."

"It's disgusting!" said Miss Fitzgerald with vehemence. "All sorts and conditions of men are saying to-day with more than the bravado of Macbeth, 'What man dare, I dare!'"

"No matter how the situation may seem to us as individuals," said Glascock with great gravity, yet with sweetness, "the social movement of our time is not a proper butt for ridicule. One very fair view of this

movement is," he added, "that it is only the latest episode in the incessant effort to get for more men things that have seemed good for some men."

Not at all abashed at Glascock's gentle reproof, Miss Fitzgerald returned boldly to the charge.

"When our fathers," she said, "framed the Declaration of Independence, they thought it 'self-evident' that all men 'are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights.' But this it seems doesn't satisfy the average man of to-day."

"The trouble is," replied Glascock, forced against his will to talk of these things upon which he was accustomed to spend his most sacred thought, "the average man rather suspects that the latest gains in civilization have clouded his title to 'life and liberty and the pursuit of happiness.'"

"Women," said the Doctor, coming to Glascock's rescue, "are apt to lose sight of the fact that this country has in recent years passed through an industrial revolution."

"Yes," continued Glascock, "and the social movement of to-day is in large measure a desperate struggle to save what seems to have been lost in this revolution."

"Come," said Mrs. Webb, "if we degrade this talk into an enforced discussion, Mr. Glascock will think more seriously than ever that not every citizen of a free country is a free man. I merely wanted to lecture him a little for his advanced ideas and his methods of work, by means of which he captivates maiden ladies like Miss Jane Summers, and holds them spell-



bound as by some mesmeric power, willing captives in what we are accustomed to look upon as a lonely, dreary old house."

This description of himself given by Mrs. Webb amused Glascock heartily and brought a laugh to his lips as he declared :

" I am delighted at being lectured ; only do not treat me as one having nothing but a serious side, for I assure you there are times yet when, like your own small boy, no power can drag me past a Punch-and-Judy show."

After this, Glascock and Mrs. Webb had some conversation of a gay nature, into which Glascock purposely drew Katherine. She looked beautiful this evening, but seemed unusually white and thin. As he gazed at the girl he recalled his talk of only a few hours before with Gordon, and remembering the keenness of Gordon's despair he felt some reproach at the thought that he had allowed him to go away alone. It was one of the few times Glascock had not been able to put aside his own personal feelings and respond entirely to the needs of another. With this in mind he took his leave as soon as convenient, determined to surrender the long, suburban walk he had planned for himself alone, and instead to hunt up Gordon and make him go with him.

" How commonplace and colorless other men seem by the side of the young clergyman ! " frankly confessed Miss Fitzgerald after Glascock had left Mrs. Webb's drawing-room. As Dr. Hogan and two other

men were present when this speech was made, naturally it was an unpopular one.

"So you, too, are falling under the spell," laughingly remarked Mrs. Webb.

"Not at all," protested Miss Fitzgerald with undue emphasis, adding: "I thoroughly object to his views and I heartily hate all those common people with whom he is crowding St. Stephen's; but he impresses me notwithstanding." With which words Miss Fitzgerald marched out of the room, evidently so indignant that Katherine felt impelled to run after her for the purpose of pouring oil on the troubled waters.

"That woman's a nuisance!" said the Doctor when Miss Fitzgerald had gone.

"You must not let your views become biased, Doctor," said Mrs. Webb, "because she considers you commonplace and colorless beside the young clergyman."

"Her verdict must be right," admitted the Doctor, "as women are said to be the test and revelation of man;" after which he took up his evening paper and began to read, while Mrs. Webb continued talking with her other guests.

Glascock, in the meantime, was unsuccessful in his search for Gordon. He went to Gordon's home, but he had not been there; he tried the library, where Gordon often worked at night, but the private way by which he usually entered was closed; he walked through the parks and open places where Gordon frequently took exercise, but he found him nowhere. In his search Glascock even went so far as the river,

knowing that at times, when dispirited and depressed, Gordon went there and sat alone, listening to its constant roar. Finally, weary from his own mental excitement and the exertion of his fruitless search, Glascock turned his face homeward, arriving there about midnight. Excepting a dim light in the hall and another in his study, the rectory was dark; the library, the gymnasium, and the class-room having been closed at eleven o'clock. With his usual vigorous, quick step Glascock mounted to the rectory porch—a somewhat massive, old-fashioned affair—and there, prone upon the floor, his head resting against the doorstep, lay Archibald Gordon, drunk beyond all power of consciousness.

“My God!” exclaimed Glascock in deepest emotion; and his thought was that this thing would not have happened had he kept Gordon with him when he was there a few hours before. He went down on his knees and gathering the slight form of Gordon in his strong arms, he bore him within, laying him with infinite tenderness upon his own bed. As Glascock tried to free the drunken man of his coat and other encumbering apparel, there fell from his inner pocket three crushed and crumpled manuscripts. These, Glascock saw at a glance, were poems, which Gordon had spent weeks in evolving, come back to him through the evening post, rejected by the editor who had half-way committed himself to their acceptance. This, then, had been the last straw! and with hope crushed entirely out of him Gordon had sought, as often before, to forget for the time-being. All through

that night Glascock watched by Gordon's bedside, ministering to his needs. Even had he not remained there, he could not have slept, as he was far too moved to find relief in sleep; and so he watched on, his heart bleeding as he thought of Katherine Webb, so young and so beautiful, with all her hopes centered in that frail form over which he was bowed. In all the world he knew nothing more pitiful; and in his soul there was an earnest longing that his protection and sympathy might be broad enough to cover all creation, especially the suffering and depressed part of it.

## CHAPTER XIV.

WHEN Agnes Carlton had shut herself up entirely to her studies and her writing, seeking through them that full expression of life which she craved, she found herself surrendered, body and soul, to a terrible deadness, like that of machinery. Then it was she began to pant for freedom, and for a life of feeling. A living life was what she felt a need of, for hers was a nature demanding perpetually the enthusiasm which comes from fresh views of duty. Exquisitely susceptible, the key to Agnes' character was its impulsiveness, and her moral improvement and inward happiness lay not in the blunting, but in the right directing, of this. With such a nature, it was inevitable that she should recoil from the routine to which David Alexander wished to subject her. And so it had come about that she was finally striving in a passionate way to work out such plans of her own as might harmonize, at least in a measure, the ideal and the actual.

Agnes knew well that the plan she had conceived was beset by difficulties. Yet she was prepared to meet them, and already she began to feel that she had reached a rational basis for a splendid optimism. Of course, Miss Rachel's criticism was, that the whole thing was visionary ; but the Major thought differently

and was vigorously aiding and abetting Agnes to the best of his ability. Together the two had tramped over the Edgewood lands until they found what seemed to them a suitable spot for locating a "Building," which Agnes proposed to erect and dedicate to social work among the poor people of the community. As she was determined to set in motion something available during the coming winter, the work was being hurried that everything might be arranged as speedily as possible. Naturally this left much to be desired, but Agnes had resolved to content herself for the present with what was possible, trusting to the future for extending the operations of her little institution.

There was likely to be a variety of opinion as to the practicability and usefulness of what Agnes and the Major intended doing. Agnes's own mind, however, was very clear on the subject, and her faith and enthusiasm had carried the Major along with her. As she went about the country and observed its conditions, thinking earnestly on all she had seen, Agnes came to the conclusion that even a community so near a town as this one in which she lived was in danger of social and religious isolation. She and others of her class found a social center in Plantersville; they merely held a residence, as it were, in the country, forming little part of its common life. Now Agnes had come to feel that these people might all combine to improve matters. At least she intended making a start, hoping that others might join in the work. The house which she had undertaken to erect was already

under way, its design being neat and attractive. The interior was well lighted, bright and cheerful, divided into two large rooms—the first a general reading and sitting room, while the second was provided with a good seating capacity and also a stage with curtain and dressing-rooms. This “Building” was to be a common meeting place for the surrounding country—a place where all should be asked to come and contribute their best to the general good. Katherine Webb had already promised Agnes that she would come certain days in the week and help. The Major was a host within himself. Others, Agnes believed, would, as time went on, lend a helping hand. To the enterprise Agnes was determined to give her own best efforts, and with the assistance of one paid worker, whom she was already seeking faithfully, Agnes felt that they could improve to some extent at least, the common life of this rural district.

“It is an Utopian dream,” said Alexander one afternoon when Agnes had taken him to the chosen spot and was telling him all she proposed doing.

“And yet, I believe,” said Agnes, “that some of the social problems of this community will be solved here.”

“And you really think the need justifies the outlay?” he inquired a little petulantly.

“I can scarcely tell you how much I think so,” she replied earnestly, adding: “While there is much that is strong and healthy in this country life, you have no idea of the moral degeneracy which it shows in spots.”

“But how can this idea be made morally effective?” he asked.

"By drawing people out of their isolated lives, by creating sympathy between them; so that those whose moral standards are very low may be helped by what is strong and healthy about them."

"Your faith is certainly very great," he replied. "I only wish that you could have applied the same faith to the work which I chose for you—a work which seems to me so much higher."

"I doubt," said Agnes, "if you are justified in feeling as you do. I cannot convince myself that work which is cut and squared for us is that which makes the highest demand. I rather think," she continued in a reflective tone, "that what makes the highest demand is that which comes as a claim upon the conscience."

"To have such a standard of action is to be guided by impulse rather than by reason," he answered.

Agnes made no effort to reply to Alexander's last remark, lest in replying she might provoke a controversy. She was trying faithfully to hold by her promise to him, and she knew that she could not do so unless peace could be kept between them. The motives which guided her at this time in her relationship to Alexander were two-fold; she had said that she would make another trial of herself in regard to him and she was determined to maintain this pledge by her best effort. In doing so she cherished a faint hope that she might gain a mastery over her feeling for Glascock. That this feeling was perfectly unjustifiable she did not doubt for a moment, and she was honestly resolved to push it further and further from



her. Even had she awakened in Glascock an emotion which he had not been quite able to conceal, she was sure that in time he would completely conquer this emotion. From what she had seen of him and from what she had heard, she was convinced that his life was wholly dedicated to his work, and that such a thing as marriage had no place in his plan of life.

Earnestly as Agnes was trying to keep faith with Alexander, she made no progress in her estimate of him; in fact this estimate was lowered each time they came together. In the beginning of their acquaintance Alexander captured her imagination by his talk about personal distinction and enduring fame being the strongest fortress of character. This view of life had appealed to her because in the past the zest of existence had always been identified in her mind with the possession of genius. But with the deepening of her own thoughts and spiritual needs, she was beginning to feel that genius itself is as nothing measured against the Infinite; and that a truly great mind will soon abandon such untenable ground as that held by Alexander, because it will see that upon such ground the soul has no chance for growth. Certain ideas about a supreme incentive for all men alike were rapidly crystalizing in Agnes's mind. Those relations which constitute the frame-work of life, the universal duties and privileges which grow out of them, the opportunities for service and suffering in the interest of ideal ends, the faith and the hope and the love which are for mankind—these things she began to feel were supreme, for the humblest as well as the greatest mind.

With such thoughts growing in her, Agnes could but see that the man who regards first his own place in the public eye and who consecrates all his abilities to making that place a preeminent one, is not worthy of very high honor. Still, she tried to persuade herself that she and Alexander might get on, and that in time he might see things more from her standpoint. In this hope she insisted upon his walking often with her, and she talked to him of the woods and the fields and all the things she loved most.

"I used to think," she said one afternoon when they were together, "that nature meant nothing æsthetically if one could not make poems about her and have them published, if one could not paint pictures of her and get them exhibited. Now I see that there is a deeper purpose in the love of nature."

Another afternoon they walked as far as the woods to the south of the Edgewood house. Far above their heads soared the trees, ever pushing upward, seeking the sun. In their leafy tops the wind murmured, and here and there a bird was stirring. A solemn stillness seemed to fall upon them as they stood there in those leafy woods. Finally this stillness was broken by Agnes.

"Dear old Major," she said, "how he loves the woods! He has told me that he has often felt he could stay here forever, till he became a tree himself. I know what that feeling is," she continued, looking up with rapt gaze at the trees about her; "a state of ravisment, a kind of absorption into the life of things about one."

Though Alexander could not understand her many moods and though he disapproved of the manner in which she was at present spending her time, her energy, and her money, he found Agnes a very fascinating companion and loved her more genuinely than he had ever loved any one. His faith in himself continued as great as it had always been, having suffered no diminution because Agnes had departed from the way which he advised. He believed that this departure was merely temporary, and that in the long run his strong hand would be able to steer her in the course he approved. Such being the condition of his mind, he held Agnes as strictly as he could to the letter of the bargain he had made with her; succeeding, as he intended to succeed, in making her feel that having become essential to him, she had no right to withdraw. Possibly Miss Rachel, full of prejudice though she was, understood the real merits of the situation better than did Agnes herself. To be sure, for the first time in their acquaintance, Miss Rachel and David Alexander agreed upon one point—that Agnes's present plans were visionary; Miss Rachel, however, was far too keen and penetrating to be betrayed by so small a thing as this. Many were the times that she sat in silence while Agnes and Alexander talked, apparently all absorbed in her knitting, yet really engaged in analyzing Alexander's mind.

One day Miss Rachel said to the Major:

"Do you think that laughter has really gone out of the world?"

"Why do you ask that?" questioned the Major.

"Because," she answered, "David Alexander makes me feel that a well-bred and somewhat sickly smile is all one should dare now. 'We are nothing,' he seems to be saying all the time, 'if we are not quiet and refined.'"

"He is certainly very conventional, liking everything cut and dried," replied the Major.

"In the days of our fathers, Major," said Miss Rachel, "men laughed loud and long out of fulness of heart and stomach, and nobody thought the worse of them. If I could hear David Alexander laugh in that way even once," she added, "I could believe in him a little more easily."

"For my own part, I agree with you," said the Major, "in liking an honest laugh; but it seems to be one of the things which has gone out of fashion."

"Alas!" replied Miss Rachel, "we are a weak and sniveling race—we who live to-day."

"Did you ever hear," asked the Major, by way of diverting Miss Rachel from her favorite topic of the superiority of old times and customs, "that a man must have arrived at the age of reason before he can fall in love vigorously and satisfactorily?"

"Why do you ask me that," was Miss Rachel's reply, "when all the world knows that nobody looks for constant and devoted hearts in raw school boys and girls?"

"Well, I was thinking of Alexander's love for Agnes," replied the Major rather meekly after Miss Rachel's indignant charge. "I should say that Alexander had outlived all that goes to make a man hare-

brained and impetuous and incapable of gauging the strength of his own emotions."

"So you conclude that his heart is the kind of soil in which may flourish a genuine passion? My dear Major, you are no judge of the qualities of a soil. You hope the best for everything, and do not know that there are some regions so barren and desolate that nothing will flourish in them."

"Yet Alexander seems very dependent upon the society and sympathy of Agnes," replied the Major.

"Poets and literary men," retorted Miss Rachel, "always require some woman to whom they cling for sympathy; the only provision seeming to be that they are not their own wives."

"Such faithlessness!" laughingly exclaimed the Major.

"Well, we all know," responded Miss Rachel quickly, "that Mrs. Shakespeare was not the inspiration of the Sonnets. And you may have heard," she continued, "that Dryden, who was a great favorite with the fair sex, and whom we both used to read when we were young, replied once to his wife when she tenderly observed that she wished she were a book, for then she should have more of his company: 'Yes, my dear, I wish you were an almanac, for then I could change you every year.'"

"That's brutal! Miss Rachel," protested the Major, yet with a hearty laugh, enjoying, as he always did, the old lady's fearless thrusts. And yet in Miss Rachel's heart there was a depth of tenderness equal to the best, though it revealed itself seldom. Indeed,

Miss Rachel was one of those beings who had suffered all her life from heart-hunger; since her early womanhood she had lived beneath the shadow of a deep personal sorrow, so deep that not even her own high spirit had been able to dispel it. This was evident from a conversation which she held with Agnes not long after the above one with the Major.

Miss Rachel was seated with her knitting in the library, the windows of which looked out upon the open lawn. The library was a room which Miss Rachel and Agnes both loved very much; besides books which spoke to one from every side, on the walls were many interesting and well-known pictures, while the glow of an open fire on the hearth invited to meditation. Agnes came into the room fresh from a walk with Alexander and threw her gloves upon a table between the hearth and the window near which Miss Rachel was sitting.

"Has he gone?" asked Miss Rachel.

"Yes," was Agnes's simple reply.

"I wish, Agnes, that you would put an end to this farce."

"There may be more involved in it, Aunt, than you perceive," was Agnes's answer, thinking, as she spoke, of Glascock.

For some moments Miss Rachel knitted on in silence, Agnes standing by the table upon which she had thrown her gloves and turning listlessly the leaves of a new magazine.

Finally Miss Rachel laid her knitting in her lap and looking up at Agnes said with unusual tenderness:

"Come here, dear."

Seeing by Miss Rachel's manner that something was on her mind, Agnes walked over to her, taking a seat on a stool at the old lady's feet and waiting quietly for what she might have to say. Nor did she have to wait long. Miss Rachel was always direct and vigorous in her methods, and did without hesitating whatever she undertook. Having once put her hand to the plow, no one could ever accuse her of a disposition to turn back.

"My dear," she said, "whether you love him or not, a man with an inflexible will like David Alexander's is always to be avoided. In the long run such a man is sure to break the heart of a woman, even if he love her." For a moment she paused: Agnes remained silent, her hands resting in the old lady's lap, beside her knitting. Miss Rachel went on speaking, though a slight break was perceptible in her voice.

"A long time ago, Agnes, I was a young girl—and possibly I was as pretty and as merry as most young girls of my time. However that may be, with a way young girls have I fell in love. The youth with whom I fell in love was scarcely a year older than myself; his face was as fair as that of a young god and his eyes were as blue as a summer sky. Only one thing was questionable in his appearance—there was something unusually firm-set about his mouth. But people said this mouth indicated character, and so we all admired him, and I loved him with all the ardor and enthusiasm of my young soul." Again Miss

Rachel paused for a moment, but Agnes still remaining silent, she continued:

"Never, never can I forget the evening when first he told me that he loved me and I promised my love in return. We had gone some miles from here to what in those days was called 'a party.' All the people whom we knew were there and it was a great affair, such as country people delighted in, in the old times, and such as you girls of this generation know nothing about. However, that is neither here nor there," said the old lady, returning to the main point of her story.

"After supper, when people became less formal and broke up in groups, I went out of doors and strolled beneath the trees with my young lover—for though he had not told me so, I knew already that he loved me. It was a summer night, a beautiful night, such as young love can never forget. There are times even now when such a night makes me turn sick, recalling as it does, all the incidents of that other night years ago."

"Dear Aunt!" said Agnes, and the old hands, weary no doubt with much waiting, were gathered tenderly into Agnes's strong ones and held firmly there as the speaker continued:

"Yes," she went on, "we walked beneath the trees, saying very little, content and happy in being together. Finally, this young god, whom I already worshiped, stooped and taking my hand said: 'Rachel, will you promise always to love me and never to forget?'



‘Yes,’ I said, ‘I promise’—little knowing how I was to keep that promise even until to-day.”

For a moment the old voice broke very audibly, but bravely it went on again, telling the story of a soul that had suffered in silence for half a century.

“Our parents thought that we were too young to marry, so there began a term of waiting. But waiting is always a dangerous thing, as our experience proved. There was no doubt that we loved each other; I know that we both felt sure of this; but it is very hard for young blood to go tamely in harness. My spirit was very high in those days, and there were other suitors in the field, and sometimes I know I flirted, as girls will do, though in my heart there was never room for any one but for him to whom I had given my promise. Still, I admit that I did not always seem as true as I knew myself to be. The result was, we quarreled; and in a fit of passion I told him that I loved him no longer.”

At this point Miss Rachel withdrew her hands from the clasp in which Agnes held them and took up her knitting, as if she needed something active to sustain her through the remainder of her recital.

“After this break,” she continued, “there necessarily followed a time of great wretchedness. I grew very reckless, I fear, riding wildly over the country, dancing and flirting, and making life as unhappy as I possibly could for myself and every one who came near me. I suppose I thought in this way I could forget the happiness I had known and the mischief I had done—but I could not forget. Sometimes I saw him

at different places," Miss Rachel continued, lowering her voice; "and that he was as unhappy as I was very evident, though he never did more than speak to me. During the time that we had been so close to one another I had learned to understand him very well. I knew that he suffered when I saw his face become deeply lined; and as the months went by the blue faded more and more out of his eyes, and that firm-set expression natural to his lips grew into something as stern and hard as iron. After a long period of this I felt that I could stand my life no longer, so I humbled myself and wrote, asking him to come to me—and he came." At this point the old lady commenced to knit very rapidly and her voice took on a passionate tone, but she did not falter, for she had resolved to tell Agnes her story, cost her what it might.

"Well?" asked Agnes, clasping her Aunt's knees with the hands which Miss Rachel had set free.

"Well," continued Miss Rachel, "I went literally on my knees to him; I took all the blame upon myself; I confessed everything—how I did really love him, how I had suffered, what was my agony of mind over his suffering. Then, with my arms about him, I ended by imploring him to forgive me, to take me back, and place me in his heart and life as I had once been." Here Miss Rachel paused, almost breathless, for the moment unable to go further.

"Dear, dear Aunt," said Agnes, stroking the old limbs that she loved so well and had rested against so confidently all her life. Miss Rachel recovered herself and continued;

"Somehow, I never doubted that things could be made right. I felt sure that a full confession from me must settle all our troubles and restore us to each other. But I had not taken into account the inflexibility and the iron purpose which the drawn lips of that young man indicated. To my dismay, instead of pressing me tenderly against his heart, which I knew even then loved me, he cast me from him almost roughly, declaring that he could never believe in me again and would not do so, no matter how his heart pleaded for me. 'And yet you love me?' I had enough presence of mind left to ask. 'Yes,' he replied, 'but that shall have no weight with me. Our ways must lie apart. I shall never forgive you.' With that he went away and left me. And Agnes," continued Miss Rachel, "it was then that all my faith and tenderness died, and I learned what a hard man may do even to the woman whom he loves."

"My dear Aunt," said Agnes, "if I had only known all this years ago, how different I might have been to you."

"No matter, my dear," replied Miss Rachel; "you have been good enough to me. I could not have stood too much goodness from any one. The only way in which I have been able to get through life has been by hardening my heart, and had you been any more tender you might have upset my plan."

"Dear heart! dear heart!" said Agnes, unconsciously using the words so often used by Archibald Gordon. "May I ask," she added, "what became of him?"

"After some years, my dear," said Miss Rachel, "he married a very pretty and very silly girl, whose vanity and silliness crushed the life out of him, and when he was about forty years of age he went down to his grave a prematurely broken man."

"And did he never give you any sign?" asked Agnes.

"Once, only once, a few years before he died," replied Miss Rachel. "I met him at some social function in Plantersville, and he stopped as he passed me by, giving my hand a desperate grasp. Even then he did not speak one word; but a strange light—the light of his youth—came into his eyes, so I knew, while he never forgave me, he went down to his grave loving me. But this offered no help," added Miss Rachel; "it only illustrated further to what extent a hard, self-centered man will push his resolve, when once formed."

"And you think," asked Agnes, "that David Alexander is hard enough to sacrifice a woman, if his purpose in life seems to demand it?"

"My dear," replied Miss Rachel, "David Alexander is that man's son. He gets his stupidity from his mother, but his inflexible will is his father's—equal to any demand which self may make upon it."

## CHAPTER XV.

FOR a whole week Glascock had given as much of his time and his attention as possible to Archibald Gordon, whose state of body and mind undoubtedly justified very grave apprehension. So completely had Gordon seemed to lose control of himself that Glascock was forced at times to consider whether the modern dictum, that a genius is always a degenerate, be not true. Nothing which Glascock had ever encountered had been more terrible to him than the abnormal state into which Gordon had passed. No appeal touched him; no restraint altered his resolve. Every day for a week he had nursed Gordon back to soberness and sensibility, only to find that the poor fellow escaped the moment he was left alone, determined to plunge headlong into the same sad condition from which with great difficulty he had been rescued. Health of body and strength of will, Glascock knew, were dependent upon nervous equilibrium, and so he understood that when the body is sick and the will enfeebled it is because there is an excess of nervous action in one direction and a deficiency in another. To restore the equality of Gordon's nervous action would be to restore him to his usual health; but to accomplish this Glascock knew that Gordon must be put in the way

of utilizing his own forces—must heal himself, must become his own reformer, as it were. What to do with him? Where to place him? What kind of influence would the most readily restore him? These questions Glascock asked himself continually as he went about his duties, trying, despite a saddened and burdened heart, to fulfil these duties as he should. The constant thought of Katherine Webb and a desire to spare her as much as possible, embarrassed and hampered him, shutting him up alone with his problem. If he sought advice in Plantersville he felt sure that he would set in motion certain waves which might extend far indeed, so he was resolved to arrange the matter as discreetly and silently as possible.

“I wish that nature might do her own healthy work upon his heart,” said Glascock aloud, as he paced his study floor.

Then it was, the thought came to him that Agnes Carlton might be able to meet this matter with a wisdom greater than his own. Possibly he was beating the air in vain with investigation, while the true way was much nearer and simpler. And yet, could he go to Agnes even in behalf of another? He knew that she would meet the situation with generosity and love; but during the few weeks past he had suffered so keenly because of the impression produced upon him by her, that he shuddered at the mere thought of intensifying his own pain by another interview. Yet what right had he to consider his own condition when to do so stood in the way of his doing good to a human soul? During all the time that he had thought of

Agnes a sense of powerlessness as to his own affairs had possessed Glascock. He tried to strengthen himself with the sense of duty done, and of self controlled. This hindered in a measure the dull despondency which he feared might settle down upon his spirit. He knew well, however, that of late he had done all his work as a man filled with sad feelings must; still his resolve was greater than ever to fix his heart on God alone, no matter how that heart might pant for forbidden fruit. That sense of impotency which had possessed him could only be dispelled by the exercise of his own will. We are borne on in life, he reflected, but not resistlessly; a man can and must control his own course. Down the rapids he may be forced to go, but always he has the privilege of steering and trimming his own craft. This, Glascock felt, was a truth to repose upon, a truth which is real, whatever else is unreal, and as such it was something to feed the heart, which in his case was the thing that ached and craved just then to a degree bewildering and stunning. Back and forth through the room Glascock paced, his brow knit with thought and his head bent low upon his breast.

"He came not to be ministered to, but to minister." These words escaped him, indicating his thought. "Yes, that is it," he continued aloud; "my path must be in the direction of humble work done more humbly than I have yet done it—in a simple life, severe and solitary. God has laid this injunction upon me and I must obey." As Glascock spoke his countenance was solemn, but not mournful, for the strong purpose

which inspired his life—the grand idea of service to others—wrote itself there in lines unmistakable and clear. At all times, even when suffering from some deep personal grief, it was easily seen that Glascock's personality was not one which could be shut within the cell of selfishness. His chief charm was a quick and genuine responsiveness to the needs of others, and so great was this in him, that he seemed at times to make the life of others his own life. This Agnes Carlton felt very distinctly when Glascock had put aside his own pain and gone to her with the story of Gordon's distressing state.

"This has been a sad experience for you," said Agnes.

"Poor fellow!" replied Glascock, "it has been far sadder for him."

"What a hard time of it such a temperament as Gordon's has always," said Agnes. "And what beautiful things he has sometimes said!" she added.

"It would seem," said Glascock, "that in his case at least, it has been necessary to learn in suffering what he teaches in song."

"It would have been different with him, I am sure, if he could have received kinder treatment in the beginning. But the tendency seems to be to trample under foot such spirits as Gordon's; to sweep them out of the way, with utter disregard of generosity."

"Yes, for while his will is weak, he is in many ways a choice product, and he has needed love and care to save him from extinction."

"There is but one way," said Agnes, after they had



talked further of the situation. "You must bring him here. Aunt and I will be able in some way to manage him."

"But," protested Glascock, "is not that too much to lay upon two women?"

"There is nowhere else," Agnes answered. "You cannot, as in most cases, take him to some institution; for that would not only crush the spirit completely out of so sensitive a soul as Gordon, but would deal too severe a blow to Katherine Webb. At any rate," she added, "try my suggestion, only reserving the other in case that fails."

"Well," replied Glascock, "your suggestion seems to offer hope; but do you think you can really manage?" he asked with deep concern and tenderness, looking at Agnes with an earnest love in his eyes, a love which no resolve could extinguish.

"Undoubtedly," she replied, turning her own gaze away from his, lest she might betray him into something she knew he would rather leave unsaid. She went on, speaking most hopefully: "I will sympathize and Aunt will lecture and the Major will hold up our hands, so that I am sure we shall get on famously and do Archibald Gordon more good than all the 'cures' which he might take."

"You are very brave and very good," said Glascock, too filled with emotion to speak more fully. Had he been able to trust himself he would have liked to say just what was in his heart—that the world has nothing to show more beautiful than such a woman as Agnes, fit by nature for the highest social things, yet

laying on herself the humble duties of sympathy and ministry. Fortunately, Agnes was able to relieve the intensity of the moment by suggesting that Glascock walk with her across the fields to the "Building," which already made a handsome showing for the future. It was a glorious autumn afternoon, unclouded, yet with the haze of Indian summer upon field and forest. The air was fragrant with the ripening herbage in the shelter of the woods, while the woods themselves were still green. The flowering season was mostly over, asters and golden rod being the chief adornment of the wayside.

"This is beautiful country," said Glascock, "so green and so open!"

"And do you know," answered Agnes, "that I look upon it all as being the Major's own? He is so happy in it and loves it so! The very roadsides would miss him, I am sure, were he gone."

"With his happiness, his goodness, his philosophic temper, and his love of outdoor things, he has made this a dearer place for you, no doubt," said Glascock.

"To me," replied Agnes, "it is dear for its own sake. My ancestry took root here when the country was first settled, then my childhood was passed here; but of late the Major has certainly increased my tenderness for the spot. But," she added, "the dear old Major is always putting me under obligation to him, otherwise I should never have been able to get so well started with my 'Building' and my other plans here." Then she talked to Glascock freely of all she purposed doing, showed him the house and asked his advice

about a playground she was having marked off for the neighborhood boys.

"You see," said Agnes, "I am making my preparations firm in the faith that 'the poor shall never cease out of the land.'"

"That is as it should be," said Glascock; "for undoubtedly what we ourselves are to become depends in large measure on the use we shall make of the poor."

"Tell me," she said, "just what you mean by that."

"Well," he said, "my meaning is this: when commerce treats the poor as utilities merely, it becomes hard and dehumanized; when culture treats them with contempt it becomes narrow and selfish; and a ministry that does not minister to the poor is, I fear, leavened with the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees."

"Yes," was her answer, "I, too, feel all that."

"I believe," continued Glascock, for the moment forgetting his own pain in the interest which his talk awakened, "that just here, at this point which we have touched, is to be found the key-note to our most serious modern problem. In the past the need has been to reconcile men to the order of society; now the need is to reconcile the order of society to the needs of men."

"But how?" asked Agnes.

"Certainly not by preaching charity to the rich and resignation to the poor, as was once done," he replied. "Nor by howling at the luxury of the rich and thereby breeding envy and discontent among the poor. Nor by preaching the socialism which would confiscate property and take out of society its most powerful

mainspring of improvement—the hope of a special reward for industry and thrift.”

“Then how is it to be done?” asked Agnes again.

“So far as I can see,” he replied, “there is but one way—that of holding up before every man the highest standard of the duty of each man to his neighbor.”

“That doctrine,” said Agnes, “is cried very loudly by many social theorists, yet it does not seem to reach the ears of the poor.”

“Because,” said Glascock, “the poor care nothing for social theorists and economists and people of that sort, even though their object is to benefit the poor. The world is waiting to-day, I feel sure,” he added with earnestness, “to hear the voice of the church on these matters, and no other voice will the poor hear so readily.”

“But everywhere,” said Agnes, “I find the poor suspicious and distrustful of the church, because they do not seem to believe that the church is sincerely interested in their burdens and difficulties.”

“Yes, I know that only too well,” replied Glascock, “and therefore the church must find something practical and helpful to say to the poor and laboring class, otherwise she has no right to complain that this class turns away from her doors, that her influence over it is lost.”

“I have sometimes thought,” said Agnes, “that we are near the cross-roads, one of which leads to a truly Christian haven and the other to a practical atheism.”

“Christianity,” continued Glascock, “can certainly not long survive without the faith of the common peo-

ple. It is no less true now than it was in the first century after Christ, that the bone and sinew of the church is found among the plain and the lowly."

"And yet," asked Agnes, "what does the gospel of Christ now offer to do for the poor in the direction of the abolition of their poverty?"

"I will answer you," replied Glascock, "in the words of Henry George, whose testimony on this subject one is not likely to consider prejudiced. He has said: 'The salvation of society, the hope for the free, full development of humanity, is in the gospel of brotherhood, the gospel of Christ.'"

For some time they talked thus together, each learning more fully the heart and mind of the other, and when finally Glascock looked into Agnes's eyes as he bade her good-by, he saw there all those rich possibilities which a life with her would bring. And as he walked away, leaving her standing in the open field—a picture to be remembered after the flood of years might have buried all the rest—it seemed to him as if the evening breeze from that other land, laden with fragrance, played upon his cheek and lulled his heart. Certainly, there are times, even on the stormy sea of life, when a gentle whisper breathes softly as of heaven, and sends into the soul a dream of ecstasy which can never again wholly die.

For some moments Agnes stood as Glascock had left her, motionless, the broad fields surrounding her, the evening breezes also playing upon her cheek and lulling her heart. She did not try to explain it, but life seemed deeper and sweeter and nearer to God than

ever before, and she felt herself stronger and braver to meet the future, no matter what it might bring. At last she was willing to make herself at rest about the end, even about death, should that come to her. For a long, long time her mind had been at sea; but drifting on in one direction as she had been, she had come finally into a current of wind bearing toward the land. Thus fresh resolves came to her, and though still eager and imaginative, she became willing to attempt nothing further for the time being than those distinct moral duties which life had already laid upon her.

"My dear, another Utopian scheme," was Miss Rachel's comment when Agnes had told her of the arrangement about Gordon.

"Possibly," replied Agnes; "but some one must do something, and I am willing to make the trial."

"Of course, my dear," said Miss Rachel, "this is your house and you have the right to introduce into it as many impecunious, drunken poets as you like; but you will accomplish nothing."

"But, dear Aunt," insisted Agnes, "men have undergone a moral transformation brought about by suggestive kindness; then may we not try it in poor Gordon's case?"

"Well, with one provision," replied Miss Rachel, whose tone had softened, as Agnes knew it would. "And that provision is," the old lady continued, "that Katherine Webb shall not come here while Archibald Gordon is an inmate of the house. I am Mrs. Webb's friend and ally in her opposition to that marriage, and I will countenance nothing that seems to encourage it."

"Agreed!" said Agnes. "I will tell Katherine that the hospitality of Edgewood is closed to her for the present. And, dear Aunt," added Agnes, "do not think that I wish to encourage Katherine's marriage with Gordon, for I do not. My tenderness and sympathy for them are stirred to the deepest depths; nothing has ever seemed sadder to me than their plight, and I fear that Gordon will never be equal to the situation. My only aim is to give him a chance—a chance for his soul, if not for his love for Katherine."

"That, my dear," replied Miss Rachel, "is satisfactory. It is perfectly correct for you to go about trying to save souls, if you can; only keep your hands off match-making. Never let your sympathy," she added, "betray you into encouraging a marriage between a penniless and morally weak young man and such a girl as Katherine Webb, who deserves something good of fate, if ever a girl did."

Glascok's first object after returning to Plantersville was to find Gordon. This accomplished he took him to the rectory and shut him up for the night in his own room. Gordon's condition at this time was a most peculiar one; his body was drunk while his mind was sober; he could control neither his arms nor his legs, yet he could control his thoughts. After a long, steady use of intoxicants Gordon often fell into this strange state; the nervous strain of which was very terrible indeed, making heavy demands upon the vitality of both mind and body. In such a condition it was useless, of course, to expect him to sleep, so

Glascock wisely sent for a physician and turned the case over to him.

"What of him?" asked Glascock later, when Gordon had been soothed and quieted.

"He is a nervous wreck," replied the Doctor.

"Yes, I know that," said Glascock; "but what can you do for him?"

"Restore the body temporarily, I trust," answered the Doctor.

"But the will—what of that?" asked Glascock eagerly.

"I fear that is weakened beyond recovery," replied the Doctor.

"Yes, yes," said Glascock sadly, "that may be. However, be good enough, Doctor," he added imploringly, "to pull him together as soon as possible, so that we can get him out of town."

"I will," was the Doctor's assurance, yet it took nearly a week to restore Gordon so that he could be moved. In the meantime Glascock spent as many hours with the sick man as possible, and often they talked very earnestly together.

"There is no use," said Gordon one day, "in denying as tenable doctrine the old idea that there is enmity between the carnal man and the spiritual man—between the flesh and the soul."

"It is only so," said Glascock, "when man is abnormal. I believe that man does well to trust his bodily impulses as well as his spiritual impulses, when they have not been perverted by false treatment. Passion is but blameless, heathful appetite run riot."



"You surprise me," said Gordon, "for you renounce for yourself not only selfish desires but natural affections."

"My case is different," replied Glascock; "I have dedicated my life to a great cause. I must carry that life in my hand, as it were, ready to sacrifice it at any moment—to go to the ends of the earth, if need be. Such being the case, I feel that I have no moral right to bind myself by ties of affection and family. Such ties have certainly," he added with evident feeling, "as supreme an obligation as that of my work, and I do not see how a man can thoroughly fulfil his duty in both directions."

"How strong you are," said Gordon, "to do that which you feel you should do!"

"Not always," replied Glascock. "At times I falter like other men and my steps grow weary. Yet by the grace of God I have been able to renounce what I have believed necessary."

"But no mortifications of the flesh help me," said Gordon. "No matter what denials I practise, my body continues as a clog upon my soul."

"Possibly you have too expiatory a conception of what is necessary. You may think that mortifications of the flesh are needed to appease the wrath of God."

"Well, certainly," replied Gordon, "if a man's sins have ever estranged him from his God, mine have, and something is necessary to placate his anger."

"Paganism," said Glascock, "represented God or the gods as wrathful with men because of their sins; therefore it represented the necessity of appeasing

that wrath in order to secure the forgiveness of sins. The fundamental principle of Christianity, however, is very different from that. God is a righteous God and he demands righteousness of his children and nothing else."

"The wretchedness of my heart," said Gordon, "has at times been so great, so tossed and tortured has it been, that even the belief that one can by sacrifices buy the favor of God did not seem to extend to me."

Pale and shattered Gordon lay upon Glascock's bed, while Glascock, a picture of manly strength and vigor, sat beside him, holding Gordon's hand, as he would that of a weary, tired child.

"That favor," said Glascock, "is one of the things that is not to be bought at any price." Then with his strong hands he arranged Gordon's pillows more comfortably, and when he had done this, he went on, repeating quietly in that voice which had become an inspiration in so many lives:

"Earth gets its price for what earth gives us :  
The beggar is taxed for a corner to die in ;  
The priest hath his fee who comes and shrives us ;  
We bargain for the graves we lie in.  
At the devil's booth are all things sold,  
Each ounce of dross costs its ounce of gold ;  
For a cap and bells our lives we pay ;  
Bubbles we buy with a whole soul's tasking :  
'Tis heaven alone that is given away,  
'Tis only God may be had for the asking.'"

## CHAPTER XVI.

NOTHING delighted Mrs. Winifred Webb more genuinely than the evening gatherings of clever and interesting people which took place at her home during the social season in Plantersville. With the return of people from the mountains, this season had already set in, and Mrs. Webb was restored to her own. The more Dr. Hogan observed Mrs. Webb, the wonder grew that so prodigious a reserve-fund of native cheerfulness had in her case survived the wreck of so much else. Many as were the drawbacks to her life, Mrs. Webb seemed to get more enjoyment out of her home and her social arrangements than any other woman of the Doctor's acquaintance. The secret how she did this could never be imparted. Doubtless it was the outcome of her peculiar southern nature acting and reacting upon her surroundings. The beauty of it all was that Mrs. Webb gave as much social enjoyment as she herself experienced, and so, most naturally, her many friends found her house irresistible as a meeting-place. Many were the times that Mrs. Webb's old-fashioned drawing-room was thick with literary and social discussion, Mrs. Webb's own quick wit never permitting such discussion to become too serious

or involved for a general participation. Mrs. Webb's conversational theory seemed to be: the greatest good for the greatest number. As might have been expected, Miss Fitzgerald proved herself at times difficult to manage; but usually Mrs. Webb handled things so adroitly that even Miss Fitzgerald, masterly spirit though she was, added to rather than detracted from the general amusement of Mrs. Webb's guests.

"Miss Fitzgerald, you know," said Mrs. Webb one evening when that young woman had felt called upon to air her opinions on the subject of the relative value of men and women, "despises man as a contemptible creature."

"No doubt the world without men would be a better place," commented the Doctor, who during the fall and winter seldom missed spending a part, at least, of every evening at Mrs. Webb's.

"Unfortunately, it is still impossible to get on without them," said Mrs. Webb laughingly.

"Of course," retaliated Miss Fitzgerald, "man is useful as a money-grubber and sometimes as a champion. But he must be taught his place. However important he may be collectively, he must not think that he is indispensable as an individual."

"If there ever was a time," said Mrs. Webb, "when men regarded women as purely domestic animals, the boot is certainly now on the other leg."

"It is nothing but nature trying to restore the equilibrium of things," retorted Miss Fitzgerald. "For much too long did man usurp the proud eminence from which he is now rightfully deposed."

"You are entirely correct, Miss Fitzgerald," said the Doctor. "Turn about is fair play." Nothing pleased the Doctor more than a battle with words, and sometimes Mrs. Webb was forced to restrain his ardor in the matter. Especially was this so when David Alexander was present, for the Doctor delighted to see that young man's solemn sense of duty brought into contact with Mrs. Webb's rapier-like wit.

"Say what you may," remarked Alexander on the occasion of the above conversation, "nothing is complete without woman's influence."

"Of course not," agreed Miss Fitzgerald, considering this one of the times when man was useful as a champion; "and the energy she expends is sometimes wonderful," the lady added.

"Yes," said the Doctor, "wonderful, indeed; especially in these latter times when she has appointed herself the guardian of art, literature, religion, and even politics, while at her clubs, if report be true, she reads the most profound papers and devotes herself to the amelioration of the whole human race."

"And these women's clubs, for example," said Mrs. Webb, "are much more solemn affairs than anything men can carry on." Already, Plantersville had advanced sufficiently to boast the possession of a woman's club, a really useful and interesting organization, but one kept often in a state of turmoil by the journalistic eccentricity which Miss Fitzgerald exercised in its behalf.

"Well, we all know what men's clubs are," was Miss Fitzgerald's retort. "Even when there is nom-

inally some great purpose behind them, they are mere excuses for eating and drinking."

"Man, you know," said Mrs. Webb, "is a trivial creature and must be amused."

"That is very true," said the Doctor; "only be sure that in most instances you keep it to yourself; for man has an exclusive instinct and doesn't like to be found out."

"All my life I have concealed my real opinion of him," laughingly replied Mrs. Webb, "knowing that it was the only way to rule him, and that woman was lost the moment man perceived that she saw through him." After this the conversation was carried in another direction.

About this time some one in Plantersville had been indiscreet enough to publish a rather daring book which Miss Fitzgerald and other virtuous souls felt it their duty to attack. One evening this subject came up in conversation at Mrs. Webb's.

"Why discuss it so," asked Mrs. Webb, "when we all acknowledge that a choice in novel reading is a matter of temperament more than of taste or discrimination?"

"Of course it is," said the Doctor; "one person may be put to sleep by the very book which another finds delightfully amusing."

"But," insisted Miss Fitzgerald, "I am for showing up things in their true light. I have no sympathy with the indiscriminate praise of books bestowed by most modern critics."

"There is something in that, Miss Fitzgerald," said

Mrs. Webb, "for if one were a credulous reader, one would often think that an Augustan age of letters came around with every rising sun."

"I dare say," added the Doctor, "that Miss Fitzgerald has been considering Hepworth Dixon's counsel to his reviewers; which was, you may remember: 'Be just, be generous, but when you do meet with a deadly ass sling him up.'"

"Thank you, Doctor," replied Miss Fitzgerald in delighted tones, adding: "It is the 'deadly ass' I am after, determined not to make his pathway sweet for him, as seems to be the fashion of the day."

On another evening the conversation took a more direct turn.

"If people who write books would only be more original, we might forgive them many things," was the comment of one of Mrs. Webb's guests.

"In one sense of the word there is no such thing as originality," said the Doctor.

"We all know very well," said Mrs. Webb, "that even Shakespeare's borrowing arm was a very long one indeed. In prehistoric times there may have been purely original geniuses, but in modern times it is useless, I believe, to search for such."

"One by one, all our old poetic idols are being shattered, so that soon we shall have nothing good of ancient times left," was the remark ventured by one of the pessimists present. Glascock had dropped in that evening, and such an opinion as this he could not let go unchallenged.

"Speaking with all reverence," he said, "I am sure

that the old times were not best. There never was an age when life was so well worth living, when human liberty was so precious, when the individual was in such high regard, and when there was such a striving after the better part, as to-day."

"Authors, like other things," said the Doctor, "come and go, novels have their short hours of life, and die, the idol of yesterday is buried and forgotten to give place to another. This is simply the way of the world."

"Yes," said Glascock, "only think of the time when George Eliot's novels were the popular theme. Every hand was lifted, every voice raised, for or against."

"Paradoxical as it may sound," said the Doctor, "change seems to be the only fixed fact in life."

And so the conversation went on, evening after evening, but Katherine Webb took little part in it, being, in fact, present as seldom as possible. There were times when her mother urged her presence; knowing full well what the girl was passing through, Mrs. Webb sought to relieve the strain of life for her by forcing her into society. It was a useless attempt, and soon Mrs. Webb discovered this. The shaft which had pierced Katherine's heart had struck home too surely for an easy recovery, and Mrs. Webb became startled as she saw her grow paler and thinner from day to day. Had not Katherine been able at this time to unbosom herself to some one, it is possible that the weight of anxiety and pain which she bore so bravely, might have proved too great for her young shoulders. Glascock had come to the rescue. In one of their talks



Gordon had poured out all his grief about Katherine, and that very evening Glascock sought the girl, and having drawn her aside, told her what he felt she should know of the situation. And while Agnes Carlton had been faithful to the promise given Miss Rachel, she had not deserted Katherine. Katherine was forbidden to come to Edgewood, but Agnes could come to Katherine, and had done so every time it was possible. On the whole she brought encouraging reports of Gordon. His health was improving, he was willing to remain quiet and to wait, and at times hope seemed coming back to him. Good as all this was, Katherine's heart hungered and thirsted for more. She wanted Gordon. She wanted to put aside all restraint, all reserve, and go to him. She longed to put her arms about him, to tell him that she forgave him, no matter how the world regarded him. She wanted to weep out her own grief on his breast, to call him by name, to smooth his hair and stroke his face and tell him that he was infinitely dear and precious to her as no one else was or would ever be. What mattered it to her if he had done wrong? He was her first love, the love of her young womanhood, and the sun in the heavens had never been more steady and true to its course than was she to this love of hers. Youth is very strong to bear and to endure, it had never been stronger than in Katherine's case. So when Agnes told her that Gordon was altered, was less strong than formerly, and found it difficult to see the light of day about him, Katherine failed to understand fully, and felt sure that her love and her faith would yet be able

to restore him, bringing peace and happiness to them both. Possibly, with this belief strong in her brave young heart, the messages of love and courage which she sent Gordon were more helpful to him than the Doctor's prescriptions, or Miss Rachel's words of wisdom, or Agnes's sympathy and care. It is hard to tell what will prove the best tonic to an invalid, or what will furnish the surest solace to a broken heart.

Never had Katherine Webb so pined for action, and never had she been so shut in and hampered by circumstances. Nature, when it is young and enthusiastic, can endure anything better than inactivity, and so Katherine found it. In some way, she felt, she must break down the bars which had been placed about her. If she might not go to Gordon, she must do something else, something actual that would bring some kind of relief. In this mood the impulse came to her to go to Emma Gordon, whom she had never seen, but of whom Archibald had spoken to her often and tenderly. It did not require much time for Katherine to follow out this impulse, though she was overtaken by a sense of timidity when finally she found herself before the quaint cottage in which Gordon lived; but she was too much in earnest to turn back. After a little hesitancy she knocked at the door, and soon Gordon's mother was admitting the tall, beautiful girl into that chamber where Emma lived her life of seclusion, with nothing but the signs of penury about her, yet content within the impregnable castle of her own mind. It took scarcely a word from Katherine to explain who she was—both women knew at a glance—and at once

Emma's frail arms drew the girl to her heart; and there Katherine wept out her grief as she would have done had it been Gordon himself. Strangely, it seemed to her, she felt almost as if she had reached Gordon, for no one had been able to comfort and help her as did this poor girl, so long the victim of an incurable disease. No doubt it was Emma Gordon's own suffering that gave her so keen an insight into Katherine's heart. Certainly she spoke to Katherine just the words she felt a need of, and Katherine was able to make herself easily at home with her. Then there was a distinct resemblance between the invalid girl and her brother; looking at Emma Katherine felt much as if she looked into Gordon's own face. Strong as was this resemblance there was that in the woman's face which made it different from that of the man. The same sweetness, the same irresistible charm was in both faces alike, but the woman's was strong where the man's was weak, was calm where his showed signs of the tempest, was smooth and unfurrowed where his had already become deeply lined and hastened to maturity by misfortune. In Emma Gordon's large, pathetic eyes alone was written the tragedy of her life and her unceasing struggle to pluck up the rooted sorrow, while in Gordon's one saw that he had watered his sorrow, fostered it, sadly watching it grow apace. One life rested firmly upon its faith in God; for the other there was no balm in Gilead.

"If we could have only kept him the radiant boy of genius he once was!" said Emma.

"Even now," said Katherine, "he is irresistible to everybody, is beloved of everybody."

"He himself," said the invalid girl, "loves beauty so, that somehow every one feels its influence when with him."

"Can we not in some way," asked Katherine eagerly, "give him a new life, so that he may repel the charges brought against him?"

"As I have lain here, year after year," said Emma, "there is nothing I have thought so much of as that, nothing I have sought so prayerfully to accomplish. The trouble is," she added, "Archie, dear heart, is a fatalist, and so can never bring himself to believe in the freedom and responsibility of the individual will."

"Yes, I know," said Katherine, "that he has a melancholy conviction of the irreparable nature of things."

"I have striven so to convince him that we fashion our own characters and lives. But he sees nothing but the stern truth—that in the physical world there is no forgiveness of sin."

"Yet, I believe," said Katherine, "that love can do a great deal, opposed even by a conviction like that."

"And so do I," replied the helpless girl, "and therefore we will love him no matter what befalls; waiting patiently for a better day." So long, though, had Emma Gordon waited for this day, that her faith was weaker now than she dared let Katherine know. She understood also, as Katherine could not, what a life of impulse and passion Gordon's had been, and how it was that a conviction of the irrevocable fixity

of the past had grown in his mind. Whatever Emma's own thoughts and fears may have been, she was able to give Katherine such sympathy and comfort as she needed, and so Katherine went away from the cottage where poverty and suffering made their home, a braver and a more resolute woman. Having dared so much as to go alone to Gordon's home and talk with his mother and sister, Katherine became determined to go still further. See Gordon himself she must! Her life was in desperate straits. All she cared for was at stake. One hour with her, she knew, would bring such hope and courage to Gordon's soul as nothing else would impart. What, therefore, were Miss Rachel's injunctions, except cobwebs to be blown to the four winds of heaven? Too long had she been docile and patient; now she would throw discretion aside and go to Edgewood, even though the commotion such a step created should wake the dead! The conditions being what they were, it was a bold measure upon which Katherine determined; but possibly it was the only thing which would have brought her real peace of mind. Emma Gordon had helped her; but the mere sight of her had increased and intensified Katherine's desire to see Gordon, and that without delay. The discreet and conventional part would have been just what Miss Rachel had bargained for; but youth, inspired with a desperate love, takes no account of such a part, cares nothing for it, in fact rather scorns it than otherwise, placing its own suffering and needs before everything else. Katherine was only prudent enough to send Gordon a note, telling him of her pur-

pose and asking him to meet her on a certain day in the pine forest to the rear of the Edgewood house.

Child of impulse and passion as was Gordon, he understood the world very well, and had no idea of compromising in the least the girl whom he loved, therefore he asked Agnes to read Katherine's note.

"We seem to have a conspiracy on our hands," said Agnes, when she had read the note and handed it back.

"What is best to do?" asked Gordon.

"What do you think?" asked Agnes in reply.

"I fear the effect of a refusal," he answered.

"I am sure that she has suffered a great deal," said Agnes, "and we should not ask her to suffer more than is necessary." Gordon walked away from Agnes as she spoke and looked out of the window, upon the broad lawn. It tore his heart to shreds to hear Agnes speak thus of Katherine's sufferings, and he could not look her squarely in the eyes as she did so. After some moments of silence he said, a genuine anguish in his tone:

"May she come?"

"Dear heart!" said Agnes. "Do you think I am made of stone? Of course she may and she must come! But she shall come openly. I will go to town and fetch her myself; and Aunt Rachel and Mrs. Webb must yield to me for this once."

"Poor Katherine!" said Gordon, "she has deserved a better fate than this." He beat his chest with his hands as he spoke and fell despairingly into the nearest chair.

"Yes, she has!" said Agnes, speaking bluntly to Gordon for the first time. "But we must try to heal her wounds as best we can; and I, for one, shall not let the world keep me from doing the kind and generous thing."

Agnes was a very skilful diplomat when she wished to be, and could surprise people before they were aware of what her intentions really were, into doing what she wanted them to do. This, she knew very well, was the only course she could pursue at present, if she hoped to coerce Miss Rachel and Mrs. Webb. No one was more willing than Agnes to concede an immaterial point; but when she felt a thing to be imperative, then she could command it as one who is not to be refused. With as few words as possible she made a statement of Katherine's case to Miss Rachel, ending by saying:

"I dislike, Aunt, more than I can tell you, breaking my promise to you; but that, I feel, is much better than breaking Katherine Webb's heart."

"Your optimism, Agnes," said Miss Rachel, "is of a curious sort—the most illogical I have ever seen."

"Some good will come of this, I am sure," replied Agnes.

"Well," said Miss Rachel, "if you can compel Mrs. Webb's consent, I shall retire from the situation. But remember; Mrs. Webb is a woman very capable of holding her own."

This Agnes knew and found to be doubly true when she laid siege to Mrs. Webb. At first Mrs. Webb would listen to nothing Agnes had to say. Her mind

was made up, she stated, and nothing could influence her.

"Besides," she said, "Katherine is a very foolish girl and will live to find it out."

"Mrs. Webb," said Agnes, "let me beg of you to trust my judgment in this matter. Believe me, I know what I am doing. Archibald Gordon is a broken man; he will never marry Katherine. Katherine's love for him, however, is now an accomplished fact. Nothing can alter that. If you keep her from him she will always feel that you have denied her her one chance of happiness. Let them have their love out. It will be better so. These things allowed to run their natural course are not half so dangerous as when curbed and restrained." Finally, by using such arguments as this, Agnes obtained Mrs. Webb's consent for Katherine to go with her to Edgewood, though Mrs. Webb assured Agnes that she and Katherine were two sentimental idiots who should not be allowed to go at large, adding:

"'Experience keeps a dear school, but fools will learn in no other, and scarcely in that.'" This was one of the times that Mrs. Webb gave full utterance to her inmost conviction, leaving it to produce what effect it might.

If Mrs. Webb could have seen Katherine and Archibald Gordon the following day, she might have admitted that her wisdom was not so great as she believed it to be. Side by side they were walking toward the pine forest of which Katherine had written in her note. Katherine looked very tall and fair, the



autumn sun tinged her pallid cheeks, and a soft, reddish-brown was kindled in her eyes. Gordon had never seen her look more beautiful. Sentiment and passion both stirred in her, making her beautiful in that peculiar way in which they alone can make beautiful. Gordon's slight figure was scarcely a match for the handsome one of Katherine, but there was something delicately alluring and suggestive in his face, and his dreamy, dark eyes were almost brilliant with the excitement and joy which the moment gave. Whiffs of balmy air came to them across the fields; with every breath it went down into the very depths of their lungs, and the whole frame of each responded with a thrill of delight. Their separation and their suffering had only served to draw them more closely together, so that in their case it would seem that what Gordon had once said to Katherine was absolutely true: "That hearts are linked to hearts by God." Once in the woods they sat down on the ground which was covered closely with pine needles, and the music of the winds in the tree-tops came to them, filling their souls with gladness, so that the Edgewood forest was a paradise that made even the loss of Eden seem insignificant. And seated there, drinking in the rich fragrance of the pine woods, their hands clasped together and their vision lost to all else except to each other, the horrible period through which they had just passed faded away like an ugly dream. Into their hearts, for the time at least, peace stole and hope for the future was very near. Waning as was Gordon's physical strength, it even seemed that he might gird

himself for another trial and make some kind of a venture in life. If this could only be, Katherine felt that she would stand justified. To live for Gordon in the humble offices of common duty formed her ideal of a truly enviable fate, and to be allowed to do that was the sole favor she asked of life. So it would seem that, after all has been done and said, there is nothing like love in the whole world, and those who live beneath its influence are the richest by far, though in very deed they have not where to lay their heads, while the others may boast wealth and the "ancestral hall."

## CHAPTER XVII.

THE autumn days were advancing, and Agnes Carlton experienced an intense pleasure in their beauty and solemnity. Yet the chief interest of her life was becoming centered more and more in the work she had undertaken to carry through at Edgewood. Of course, there were difficulties to be overcome. Many of the people whom Agnes wished to reach proved to be proud and exceedingly sensitive; and soon she discovered that however exalted may be the spirit of self-sacrifice with which one attempts any kind of social regeneration in a rural community, the workman must go at his task with boots off and a dark lantern at the belt. The best of motives, she perceived, will fail utterly without tact, just as the best methods fail without love. So it was, she set herself chiefly to win the hearts of the people about her, seeing that her completed plan must be the flower of a slow and very patient growth. The "Building" had reached its completion, and already through the influence of books and talks and music, people were gathering there, while the playground had been accepted by the boys of the neighborhood as their rightful heritage. If in time only such influences as tend to make coarseness and brutality repulsive could become effective among

the poor in the Edgewood district, Agnes felt that much would be accomplished. Surely it would be something worth the doing, to rob of its force the frequent plea that all the beautiful things and all the ennobling æsthetic pleasures must be sought in towns and cities. Archibald Gordon had consented to make Edgewood his home until the first of the year. Agnes engaged his attention in her work, and this helped both the man and the work; and since Katherine Webb had won her way to Edgewood, she came there freely, taking charge of the music at the "Building," as she had promised to do. Thus Agnes's plans moved forward and were to some extent already put into active execution.

"The bravery and the noble endurance that are displayed in the lives of some of these quiet country people are simply wonderful," said Agnes one day as she and Gordon went about together, planning things for the evening, at which time the people were most inclined to gather at the "Building."

"And yet," she added, "on the whole, life in the country is deadened to every sort of ambition, so that scarcely any one to-day attempts to distinguish himself in a noble way in a small town or in a country neighborhood."

"It does seem," assented Gordon, "that all the ambitious young men and women desert to the cities."

"They have been literally driven out with scorn such as no one is able to resist."

"I suppose," said Gordon, "that in the country industry and intelligence pay very poorly, while any

effort to change the existing order of things meets with little appreciation."

"Everywhere it seems to be the old story," said Agnes; "the son of the soil tries the losing experiment for years, then gives it up and sinks to the level he finds about him."

"It must be that many a country lad of promise never has a chance, and that much talent is thrown away because there are no means of developing it."

"That is just it, and my hope is that in the future when a boy about here shows enterprise, we may foster his ambition, see that he receives an education, and get him launched upon a worthy career."

"I trust," said Gordon with earnestness, "that you may realize your hopes."

"I shall realize some of them," she replied, "if I can only set people to work in the right direction; if I can make them feel their responsibility to the community in which they live."

As Agnes's interest in her work grew and her ambition for it increased, she began to recognize in herself a longing for a wider union than that of family or class. Soon she saw that all sorts and conditions of men and women were becoming included in her hopes. At times her mind was sore and depressed over the difficulties of the situation, especially just what personal relationship hers should be to those she sought to help. There was unavoidably an incessant clashing of ethical standards between herself and those whose convictions and mode of life had been so totally unlike hers. She was determined, however, not to avoid a personal re-

lationship with any of the people with whom she was thrown, lest her attitude toward her work should seem to be an outside one; and she was fully willing to face every perplexity of the situation, so that she might lose none of its vitality. In fact, she was by this time firmly within the grasp of a principle of growth, working outward from within; her individual sympathies and her intelligence had been caught into the forward, intuitive movement of humanity. All her past life she had been accumulating knowledge and forming convictions, with the result that at last this knowledge and these convictions were being applied to life itself. Everywhere she had seen fail the dogmatic rules usually prescribed for human conduct; finally she had come to trust the human impulse, as all must do who would make any kind of an appeal to the sympathies of their fellow men.

By degrees Agnes ceased to think with regret of her writing which she had laid aside. That longing, so characteristic of her, to give visible expression to all that went on in her innermost soul, seemed appeased by the activities of her present life. Her work gave her a new attachment to life itself; she was consecrated afresh and the whole world illuminated by an unusual brightness. Colder natures can scarcely comprehend such a temper as that of Agnes Carlton, a temper to which each new experience came with the shock of passion. At last this temper was fully aroused, and the woman's soul could no longer be pacified by dreams or shadows, but was rather to be consumed by the duties which lay around it. Innumer-

able were the tasks which she imposed upon herself from day to day, and all prejudice and discord seemed to disappear before her generous and vitalizing personality.

"Hers is the loveliness of a beautiful spirit enshrined in a person of exquisite grace," said Gordon one day to the Major.

"Yes," replied the Major, "she has come to the ambition to be filled with all nobleness."

Even David Alexander saw the developments taking place in Agnes, and yet his understanding of them was but superficial and half-hearted. The radical differences of organization between the two were far too great for it to be otherwise. Agnes's intercourse with Alexander was still touched by that human and personal quality which characterized all her relations with people; yet slow and cold as was he in all matters of the heart, it was impossible for him to meet or comprehend her magnanimity. So many thoughts, so many facts yesterday, so many to-day—this was his idea of friendly intercourse, and when there was nothing more to tell, the game was up with him. Such susceptibilities as those possessed by Agnes had always been entirely outside of Alexander's apprehension, and no amount of intimacy with her could alter the case. Alexander's need was really for that peace which belongs to the studious, investigating mind; the intensity of passion of which Agnes was capable at times was meaningless to him. Yet pride and ambition influenced him to follow her and make demands upon her time and solicitude. Striving to be true to all the ob-

ligations she had imposed upon herself, Agnes fought bravely to fill the place she had taken by Alexander's side. Especially was this so after Miss Rachel's revelation of his parentage. This revelation had made her keenly alive to the fact that Alexander had entered life terribly handicapped by an unhappy inheritance. Her heart was touched for him, and she sought as never before to penetrate below the surface and reach those tender emotions which she dared hope at times might be there hidden away. As time went on, however, she began to see that nothing could avert the jars and reverses which threatened the destiny of Alexander and herself. Necessarily her faith in him grew less and there was no extenuating circumstance that could make her sacrifice seem a radiant thing. Alexander responded to none of her deeper needs, he continued hard and cold, insisting on all occasions upon his own view of things, calling her sharply to account for a wilful waste of time and talent, so that while she continued to do that for which she had given her pledge, there was always with her an impulse unfulfilled and a reaching out to forbidden realms.

The trouble was that while Agnes's hands were full her heart was empty; or worse, was filled with emotions to which she dared not give expression. There were so many words that needed to be spoken with the assurance of pure love and calmness. Her work engaged her energies and sympathies, yet her own heart cried out for lasting satisfaction and repose. Thus the inward strife, the restless questioning, went on,



and Agnes found that the work of renunciation must be done anew every day.

"Is it," she asked herself at times, "that God wishes to leave me no refuge but himself?" On this subject no human heart had her confidence, and so her spirit remained apart and she took shelter in her work and in service to her friends and loved ones. Yet often when alone there burst from her suddenly the passionate cry, "O my God! shall life never be sweet?" The anguish of her soul was very deep, for hers was a nature capable of bestowing the most exalted tenderness and requiring the same gift in return.

And yet there entered into her heart not one doubt of Glascock. She realized fully what he meant to her, and what was the extent of his influence over her. Though he had not spoken, she knew that he loved her and was fighting with himself a terrible battle on account of that love. It had become a part of her great obligation in life to see to it that Glascock did not lose this fight he was waging so stoutly and silently. If he loved her, hers must be the part to keep him true to his ideal, no matter how difficult it might be for her. Upon this she was resolved. Clouds might gather about her spirit as the clouds which cover the sky, but she was determined to go on her course as resolutely and courageously as if all the stars were shining above her. There had come into her heart a new belief which bore her up and sustained her—the belief that when one has once seen a great view from the summit of a mountain, he should not question the existence of the landscape because after de-

scending into the valley he no longer sees it. So when one has seen a great truth or passed through a great experience, he has had a final and conclusive demonstration. As to Glascock and the needs of his life, Agnes knew the truth without being told definitely, and so she would not ask for a daily confirmation. The light might fade and the splendor pass, but she would doubt neither the light nor the splendor. If it be appointed all men to suffer pain and disappointment she would accept her portion, glad to have stood at the gate of heaven, even though it had not opened to her. And in one way or the other, without any explanation between them, Glascock came to understand Agnes in part. At times he came to Edgewood because she requested it of him; at other times he saw her in Plantersville, where she never shunned him. The determination to see him often and know him better was a part of her courage; she was resolved not to run away from him and that he should not run away from her. They must face each other and their situation squarely and bravely, as responsible man and woman. Their association being such, Glascock soon discerned certain conditions of Agnes's mind.

"Did you ever think," she asked him one day when they were alone together, "that a ship sails as fast and definitely on her course when there is no shining of the sun as when the skies are blue over her?"

"That is to say," he replied, "that conditions are not ours to arrange; neither is it our duty to conform to them."

"Yes," was her answer, "we are responsible only for holding by the truth we know, without regard to our feelings. We are bound to make our port without regard to weather."

Again, one afternoon when they were walking together across the fields with Gordon and Katherine a little in advance of them, some significant words passed between them. A precious and solemn stillness had fallen upon them; they felt that all was peace about them. The feeling which Agnes so often experienced—a state of ravishment, a kind of absorption into the life of things about her—took possession of her. It was too intense a state to last, but while it did last it was like heaven, a foretaste of all the joys that the human heart can know. Unconsciously Glascock had fixed upon Agnes his wonderful eyes, eyes which had a power little less than irresistible. On this afternoon as he looked into the face of Agnes, she felt herself drawn toward him by some supernatural influence. Standing thus, each made a complete revelation to the other. It was as Plato imagined it would be in the judgment—one soul in contact with another, nothing between. Agnes was the first to recover herself and to break the spell which had held them bound in silence. There was a tremulous emotion in her voice as she spoke, and Glascock saw the radiance in her eyes fade to a quiet tenderness.

"There is no true life for any of us," she said, "without sacrifice, no real growth without sorrow."

"It is a comfort," he replied, "to remember that

there is an anguish which is also the divinest of opportunities."

"I suppose that it is the anguish of bearing the cross, not for ourselves but for others."

"Yes," said he, catching the personal note in her words, "of laying down our lives, if need be, that others may take their lives up in nobler ways and happier times." Thus their surging passion was turned into a lofty spirituality, and Agnes Carlton's tender grace showed Glascock the way he believed to be his when his own feet had come very near losing it.

While no one held Agnes's confidence in regard to Glascock, certain features of the situation revealed themselves to those who had the eyes to see, and among these the Major proved himself possessed of the keenest vision. Often as he sat alone in his house, there came to him a beautiful dream of what her life with Glascock might be—a dream bringing gladness to his old age. If this thing might only be, it seemed to him that out of the past there would come for him, and possibly for Miss Rachel too, an angel with healing in his white and lustrous wings; all then would not be lost in the sands. Yet if ever he dared mention the subject to Agnes, she evaded him and gave him reasons for its not being which appeared to him unsubstantial and shadowy. However, the Major knew a good deal about the weakness, as well as the strength, of human reason, so he dared to hope against hope, allowing himself to dream many a fair dream before his splendid old fireplace, where logs blazed. In his anxiety the Major turned to Miss Rachel.

"Somebody should do something!" he said to her one day, as he sat with her in the Edgewood library, smoking the pipe of peace and domestic comfort.

"Then why do not you do it?" asked Miss Rachel, adding: "I know of no one who has the same amount of faith to bring to the task."

"But Agnes will not listen to me," replied the Major, giving no heed to the acid drop easily detected in Miss Rachel's words.

"My dear Major, your hair is white and your step is faltering, and yet you have not learned that the girls of this day listen to no one. The wormword of many disappointments may seem bitter on my lips, but I have acquired wisdom, while you, with the weakness of old age, allow yourself to dream dreams."

"Then I have the advantage of you," said the Major, "for I dwell in a land where I have things all my own way, while you are the creature of circumstance."

"Well," retorted Miss Rachel, "all I have to say is, that the sooner you get rid of your sentimentality, the better for yourself and every one. People with *feelings*," she added, "are a great nuisance to themselves and to their friends, and should, I am sure, be treated accordingly." And so the Major got little comfort from Miss Rachel, but in the innermost recesses of the old lady's heart there was a longing equal to that in his, and nothing would have pleased and gratified her so much as to have known that some day Agnes and William Glascock would become husband and wife.

Archibald Gordon was a passionate observer; an

observer not perhaps of the deepest things in life, but of the whole realm of the immediate, of the expressive; and this faculty, united with the feeling of the poet who sees all the finer relation of things, gave him a very sympathetic understanding of Agnes at this time. In a measure Gordon's health was restored, but it was easily seen that he had no very substantial grasp on life. That light, warm, frank element in him, rendering him at all times so charming, had never been more conspicuous and fascinating than during his stay at Edgewood, where he was able to bask in the sunshine of comfort and ease. Agnes understood Gordon's incompleteness, his quick and exaggerated sensibility, yet she loved him as one would love a wayward child, and constantly sought to ward off the hard blows from his susceptible nature. Often in these days did Agnes's arms find their way about Katherine as the two girls talked of Gordon, for though Agnes saw clearly the impracticability of Katherine's attachment, she could not withhold her sympathies. Disapprove of Gordon one might, but it was impossible not to love him when thrown with him; even Miss Rachel admitted this, surprising Agnes one day by saying, that really, after all, there was "a note of music in the fellow."

The tenderness and affection which Agnes felt for him were greatly increased by the long talks they often had together during this stay at Edgewood; and that undue pessimism which his life had produced in him seemed to become greatly abated.

"I used to think," he said to her one day, "that all

the nobility, the self-abnegation, the honesty and goodness of the world were dead."

"And now?"

"You and Glascock and Katherine have taught me that the world is still full of generous feeling and noble action."

"And I," continued Agnes, "used to think that the reading of books and the writing of them should constitute the chief aims of a noble life."

"And now?" asked Gordon.

"Now I see that it is the living forces of the day which should chiefly enlist our attention," she replied. "We should seek our thought and inspiration, in the main, from the lives of those who are struggling for a fuller existence."

"And yet," said Gordon, "you would not deny that books are essential—an influence of vital importance to ordinary lives and to civilization?"

"Not at all," she replied. "The great books, the ones which make an universal appeal to the human heart, are always important. I only wish to emphasize the point which once I lost sight of; that thought avails very little unless it induces action; that books which are mere words and which do not illumine and exalt human life are a drug upon the market."

Thus they often talked together of things interesting to both, Gordon, who was a profound believer in tobacco, nearly always holding in his hand a cigarette or a pipe, while that smile which every one loved in him irradiated his whole face. In the midst of her own private perplexities Agnes passed in this way

some delightful hours, and a new appreciation came to her of what a charming companion Gordon could be when he would. His words, when set down in cold type, make no such impression as they did when spoken. His charm was illusive and intangible, like a view of meadow upland on a day that is touched with impalpable mist. Little wonder that people loved him, and that a tender woman's heart, like that of Agnes, shone out when with him, lighting the dark valley of the shadow for him, bringing him comfort and help.

After Agnes became sure that Gordon would permit her to keep him a willing prisoner at Edgewood, she took upon herself the care of Emma Gordon and her mother. Never coming in contact with the world in active relations, everything affected Emma's delicately organized nature. She loved her family and the few friends who came to them to the point of passion, and it was not long before Agnes had completely won the heart of the invalid girl. Agnes added to and rearranged the furniture in her room, placing flowers and books there in such profusion as the girl's eyes had never before seen. With such influences as these in her life, Emma's physical limitations seemed mere incidents, and her faith in human nature and in the love of God grew more calm and clear. The simplicity and the independence of the girl's spirit pleased Agnes; it was marvelous to her that a woman so frail that it seemed as if the lamp of life could not be kept burning longer, should not only keep alive a great faith in her soul, but should also keep alive a keen interest in the great subjects that engage the thoughts of



men. Mrs. Gordon, to whom poverty was never much of a burden so long as she could procure plenty of books to read, found Agnes's friendship a very substantial gain, and thus the Gordon cottage became the home of more comfort and beauty than had ever seemed possible. In a few weeks after Agnes's reign began, there were indications on every side in the cramped little house that a many-sided mind had been at work within the walls. Glascock was the first person to notice this and knew, before Emma told him, who it was had wrought the change.

"Isn't she wonderful?" Emma asked of him with enthusiasm.

"Yes," he replied, unable to say more.

"Why!" continued the invalid girl, "there is about her a womanly love of pretty clothes and pretty things; then there is her interest in the smallest details in the lives of her friends, besides a passionate concern in the wider questions affecting social life."

"Yes," he answered, "I think that she cares for everything which tends to make the world better;" and there was a magnetic earnestness about him as he spoke which would have convinced the most skeptical listener.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

IF Mrs. Webb considered the tactics adopted by Agnes as injurious to her own dignity, no one was the wiser. When necessary, Mrs. Webb knew better than most people how to maintain a discreet silence. Not that she ever feared to express her real opinion, for when it came to a question of personal courage she had a right to speak with the best. Hers, however, was the belief that nothing is to be gained by dwelling upon dangerous topics, and most things, she felt, can wait perfectly well until time brings its own solution. Thus her worldly wisdom had come to be considered above question, and her reputation for superlative tact rested like a halo over her brow. Dr. Hogan, though but a man, flattered himself that he understood Mrs. Webb's attitude toward life, and certainly he approved this attitude, which, in fact, was but the carrying out of his own philosophy. Little sympathy had the Doctor for an useless expenditure of energy, or for words spoken without aim or purpose. Things tersely and sharply put met his conversational requirements, and the greater the freshness of epithet and the more individual the phrase, the better he liked it. Mrs. Webb measured up to the Doctor's standard; but while he delighted in her talks, he respected her

periods of silence, and when she said little in regard to Katherine, he knew that it was not because she thought less earnestly on the subject. The truth was, life had never pressed more hardly upon Mrs. Webb than at this time, but even then her sense of humor kept alive her interest in the spectacle of humanity; and so she battled forward with a stout heart, as others upon whom misfortune has left its scars, have had to do.

One evening Dr. Hogan, coming in upon Mrs. Webb earlier than usual, found her without other guests. It was for both an opportunity for a little personal talk, and they quickly availed themselves of it.

"You will not believe it," said Mrs. Webb, "but I have had to make it a matter of *prayer* to be able to keep calm while I see things going wrong all about me." By virtue of his own childless life the Doctor was supposed to be ignorant of parental anxiety and pain, yet Mrs. Webb's words touched him deeply, producing in him an awe-struck feeling, as if he stood powerless before an imperative situation. He hastened to let Mrs. Webb understand what a genuine heroine he believed her to be, and how in all essentials she pleased his taste and fancy. Had it not been that both Mrs. Webb and Dr. Hogan had passed their passionate "prentice" years, it is difficult to say what might have happened. As it was, both had learned their lesson and profited by it to the extent that they knew their own limitations as well as those of circumstance; so each made an appeal purely to the maturity

of the other and a wholesome friendship continued between them.

That Dr. Hogan's point of view pleased Mrs. Webb on this special evening was manifest from her words.

"Doctor, you have a positive genius for friendship," she said, "and that is delightful in face of the fact that there are people with souls so dead they do not even know the meaning of the term."

"Perhaps as a natural type," replied the Doctor, carrying the conversation into impersonal waters, "we human beings are all selfish, unsympathetic creatures, and only the veneer of civilization makes us seem different."

"What talk for an idealist like yourself, Doctor!" said Glascock amusedly, coming in at this moment and dropping easily into the conversation going on between Mrs. Webb and Dr. Hogan. "Try as you may," he added, "you will never be able to bound your vision merely by what you see."

"He is an idealist," said Mrs. Webb, "but not one who believes that ecstasy shall become daily bread."

"Yet there is certainly something in the Doctor's case," continued Glascock, in a tone of amusement, "beyond the evident and actual order of things."

"Those who have reason to know," replied the Doctor in amiable protest, "are persuaded that more clever things are said in this house within a given period of time, than in all the other houses in Plantersville. I am willing to claim my share in this lighter play of the mind, but not willing to become the butt

of ridicule for such spirits as Mrs. Webb and yourself."

"Come, Doctor," said Mrs. Webb, "it is always better, you know, to meet new movements with an open mind than with a passionate resistance."

"Then you know," said Glascock, "that some minds are such a joy and inspiration that it is difficult not to exploit them."

"Which remark proves," laughingly replied the Doctor, "that 'the mixture of a lie,' as Lord Bacon philosophically says, 'doth ever add pleasure;'" with which thrust the Doctor turned to the evening paper, leaving the conversation to be pursued by Mrs. Webb and Glascock.

Later in the evening Dr. Hogan and Glascock walked away together into that part of the town where were to be seen quaint structures and narrow streets. This was the Plantersville in which Glascock's work was mainly done and the one which Dr. Hogan loved—the old town born of its stones and traditions, half fancy and half fact, in which the mysterious past and the still more mysterious present were indissolubly linked. The Doctor belonged to that generation which never tired of handing down the old traditions, and Glascock had very greatly enlarged his knowledge of Plantersville through his talks and walks with the old gentleman, who was frequently his companion since Archibald Gordon was no longer in town. The more frequent these walks and talks, the more Glascock realized that when the Doctor was gathered to his fathers the best part of old Plantersville would go

with him ; for he was in a very complete way not only its most typical man, but its most faithful and charming recorder. No one living knew more thoroughly the old traditions of Plantersville and Virginia than did Dr. Hogan, and none was a more thorough-going lover of his native State, though with the capacity, as has been said, for making love of his native State the opportunity for the freest and sharpest criticism at times, a thing rare and exceptional in a Virginian. Loving independent thought as Glascock did, he had met no one in Plantersville who so interested him as the Doctor, no one with whom he could discuss matters so freely without fear of being misunderstood. Doubtless the Doctor was stimulated by contact with Glascock, and inspired when with him to give forth his best. Certain it was, the two men never parted from each other without the Doctor's experiencing a sense of increased hope. Something seemed to escape from Glascock of which the clergyman himself was not aware and which no one could analyze; something making others believe more deeply in themselves and in their kind.

As the two men pushed on in their walk through old streets and alleys little frequented by such as themselves, Dr. Hogan saw that Glascock was already well known to the people who lived in this region, and how this was so he very soon understood. At one corner they were stopped by a crowd of boys who came close and clustered about them. It was not many moments before Glascock was telling these boys some story that was very plain and near to them, rendered espe-

cially so by the freshness and attractiveness of its presentation. Further down the same street they paused to speak with a group of women standing before an open door and engaged in eager conversation.

"What is it?" asked Glascock as the women saluted him.

"It's the baby, parson, dyen," replied one of them, "and Adams drunk and beaten his wife."

"Wait a moment, Doctor," said Glascock as he passed beyond the open door and into the house. The Doctor did not wait but followed Glascock to find him in a narrow, low-pitched room, meagerly furnished, where a thin, worn woman of about thirty held a dying child upon her lap. As the woman in the street had said, Adams, the father of the dying child, was drunk, "trying to assuage his grief," as he told one of his comrades, and inclined at the same time to be extremely belligerent.

"Stop your damn'd snivelin'!" the intoxicated man called out to his wife as he saw that strangers had entered the room.

"Come," said Glascock, "let us have quiet here!" The drunken husband rose up from the corner in which he sat, and shaking his fist at Glascock plunged into a volley of abuse. To avoid a scene Glascock passed the man by, and stopping beside the wife said a few words to her. As he stood thus, the infuriated husband crossed the room, and without a word of warning dealt a severe blow to the woman whose slender arms encircled their dying child. Quick as a lightning flash Glascock turned, and dealing the

drunken man a still severer blow than he had given his wife, felled him in an instant to the floor.

"Let him lie there awhile," said Glascock as the Doctor came forward to offer what assistance he might; and then bending over the grief-stricken woman, Glascock took the child from her trembling, weary hands, laying it gently upon the one bed in the room.

"O sir!" cried the woman in passionate tones, as relieved of her burden she threw herself forward and wept in heart-breaking fashion. As soon as the neighbors discovered that the drunken and belligerent husband had been silenced and subdued, they came in and gave what help they could, and when Glascock and the Doctor took their leave somewhat later, a certain degree of peace and order reigned in that stricken household.

"How pitifully low seems the standard of family life in poverty-stricken districts like this," said the Doctor as he and Glascock walked on together.

"Yes; and unless we can find a way of doing something for the hearts of these people we can hope for no improvement."

"Sometimes it would seem that no remedy can modify the influences of heredity. Certainly, threatened punishment has little effect in most cases."

"It really seems," said Glascock, "that a large part of humanity is irresponsible for its actions and unfitted to mix with society. In many men the will-power is so weak and the evil instincts so strong, that they are utterly incapable of keeping inside the law while free agents."



"Then undoubtedly," replied the Doctor, "such men should be locked up like other lunatics."

"In extreme cases that is of course necessary; still, I think no matter how criminal may seem a man's heredity, we should not forget how wonderful may be the influence of environment and education. If his environment has been bad, try to change it, and then see what an education of the heart and the moral impulses will do for him."

"Example, I know, is contagious," said the Doctor.

"So much so that man is in society not to accept things as he finds them and to conform to the standards of those about him, but to create and impress his own standard."

"Yes, I feel that," said the Doctor, "and it is amazing how quickly any kind of original expression is recognized. As a case in point, take what Agnes Carlton is attempting to do in the country around Edgewood. A few months ago, when she started her work, it seemed like an idle dream; now we all perceive that she saw further than we and has set in motion certain influences illimitable in their power for good."

"What she is doing is especially important," said Glascock, "when we consider that in this country the farms and villages contain three-fifths of our whole people and three-fourths of our people of American parentage."

"I am delighted," said the Doctor, "to see some one attempt to set the tide in the direction of the country, especially here in Virginia, where pure air,

pure water and pure food come to us as pure gratuities."

"I have often thought," replied Glascock, "how none of us stop to consider what a blessing is our abundance of pure water, pouring everywhere from living springs in Virginia."

"And our temperate climate," added the Doctor, "is not to be overlooked, for it cheapens the cost of living and is tonic enough in itself to give one a vigorous constitution."

Intensely interested as was Glascock in the social problems confronting men of all conditions to-day, it was not strange that he had already discovered in Plantersville a Club of Working-men who had banded themselves together in order that they might cement the social ties existing between them and at the same time obtain a meeting-place where free discussions on social questions might be held. Continuing their walk, the two friends came finally upon the house in which this club had found a home, and after a few words of explanation Glascock induced the Doctor to enter with him. Passing through the private entrance of "a corner grocery," they climbed a flight of narrow steps, and in a few moments found themselves in a small room already crowded to excess. Some of the men, who seemed to be mostly mechanics, were seated in groups about the room, others stood against the walls, while still others had found a resting-place on the window-sills. One, a tall, slim, disjointed fellow, with an intelligent face and earnest manner, was speaking eagerly on the subject of monopoly. There

was some shuffling of feet and a few nods of recognition as the young clergyman and his friend came into the room; but the attention of the audience was very much enlisted in the subject before them, and the speaker, who had some force, was presenting his side rather strikingly. That a gathering of working-men took place frequently in old Plantersville had never occurred to Dr. Hogan. Like all intelligent people in the South, the Doctor thought a good deal on the negro problem, undoubtedly the great social problem of the South. But that there was a set of mechanics, not a mile from Mrs. Walworth's boarding-house, who could discuss with well-informed discrimination one of the most perplexing questions of the day, was certainly a new idea. The Doctor watched the scene with greatest interest, and heartily thanked Glascock for revealing to him this unknown phase of Plantersville life. As the speaker of the evening went on unfolding his views of the subject of monopoly, again and again, from different parts of the room, a man would rise to his feet, asking a question or offering some gratuitous information on a point which, in his opinion, the speaker failed to make clear. Occasionally there were murmurs among the men, with repeated shuffling of feet, but on the whole all was order until the last sentence was spoken. After this some cheering, and then, as if every man in the room was thrilled with the same emotion, there burst forth loud calls for Glascock. Evidently these men hailed Glascock as a friend. The fact was, the working-men of Plantersville felt that at last there had come to dwell among them a clergy-

man who could enter into their aspirations and troubles. When Glascock spoke to such men as these he neither patronized nor flattered, but made them feel that he sympathized with them as men, and so they were ready to lay aside their own prejudices and to receive gladly what a man of a different class from theirs had to say upon subjects which were agitating them. As Glascock answered to the demand made upon him, Dr. Hogan was especially impressed with the undaunted bearing of the man whose calm voice and musical flow of pauseless speech seemed to act as a magnetic power, uniting him to his hearers. For the space of a quarter of an hour Glascock talked to the men about him on the subject which had called them together for the evening.

“Doubtless we must find ways of restraining this power, or controlling it for the good of all. I believe in monopolies; indeed, vast economies are possible by means of them; but I believe that the people should own every one of them and reap their gains, rather than that a few should be enriched at the expense of the many. But the one thing needful is the application to all human relations of the Christian law of brotherhood. It is well if we forbid men thus to lay tribute on another; but that will avail us little unless we can see that such spoliation violates the Christian law as really as does theft or slavery; and that human society cannot rest on secure foundations until the desire to enrich ourselves at the expense of our neighbors is submerged in the nobler wish to make them sharers in our prosperity and partners in our happi-

ness. So it all comes back to this at last. Of all our social questions this is the one: Do we believe in Christ's law of brotherhood? Are we willing to recognize it as the fundamental law of all our social life, and to test all our methods, all our institutions, by it?" \*

As later Glascock and Dr. Hogan walked home together, silence held between them. The Doctor linked his arm in that of the younger man, walking with an air of pride and confidence by his side. When he reached Mrs. Walworth's, he found David Alexander, as usual, burning the midnight oil over his notes and papers.

"Come, Alexander," said the Doctor, "put those things down and let me tell you the story of a *man*," and when he had related the adventures of the evening he ended by saying:

"I have never before had such a revelation of a passionate interest in all that concerns the complex welfare of a community, and of a man's joy in bringing all his powers to the happy service of that community."

Alexander received Dr. Hogan's outburst without comment, yet it disturbed him no little, for he had his own suspicions of Glascock in regard to Agnes Carlton, and his dissatisfaction with the whole situation had of late become almost intolerable.

After Glascock parted from Dr. Hogan he walked directly to the rectory, and closing his study door upon himself sat in the silence with his own personal

\* "Social Problems of the Future," by the Rev. Washington Gladden, D.D.

thoughts. During the day he pushed all such thoughts as far away from him as possible, allowing his work to consume all his energies. When the day's work had been done and the time for relaxation came, those emotions which disturbed his inner consciousness could no longer be held in abeyance. At this hour, quiet and undisturbed, looking searchingly into his own soul Glascock saw what a longing was there for the constant love and companionship of Agnes Carlton. He recognized also that each day Agnes was becoming more and more the inspiration of his life, and that he had learned in a surprising manner to depend upon her judgment and criticism. Sustained by her presence, he entered upon his daily tasks with intensified enthusiasm. It was impossible to express in words the minuter shades of feeling which passed over Glascock's heart as he felt the beams of everlasting truth and love burst about him. And yet it abated in no measure that instinct for self-sacrifice which had made him deem it his duty to surrender his whole life to his work. His motto was still: "If any man will follow me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily." Glascock's idea of self-denial was not an irrational one, for he understood as few men do that a clergyman has to deal with real beings of flesh and blood, and that his necessity of living as Christ did, among men in the world, is great indeed. His austerity extended merely to personal matters, the belief having taken firm hold of him that his was the obligation to keep life strong and pure without human aids, to develop his sympathies through work for his fellow men, com-

forted and encouraged alone by God and his own soul. If in his effort to conform to this standard, which he had conceived as essential in his case, he stood in danger of placing the letter of the law before its spirit, he had not yet perceived such a danger. Nor did he apprehend that his sympathies might in time diminish rather than increase, should he close his heart against the holiness of personal, human love and his eyes to the beauty of it. It was only that he sought to dedicate himself to God in singleness of purpose and to keep his eyes fixed unfalteringly upon the execution of his mission as he had conceived it; and this, he had taught himself to believe, called for a life on the hard rocks, where, it seemed to him, the highest must ever repose in this world. That it was no easy matter for him to hold himself firm in this faith, we have seen, for his heart ached and yearned as that of other men, and the appeal which Agnes made to his love was the most profound he had ever known. But that Agnes was likely to suffer greatly through him did not yet occur to him, or if so, vaguely, scarcely as a possibility. Had it occurred to him at this time, he could not have felt or acted differently, and he believed in Agnes to the extent of believing her capable of understanding how it is that often the greatest proof of love is to debar happiness. So he concluded, as he reflected upon his work and his personal needs, that all must be right if pain be the minister of good, and that the human heart, like a wound, must bleed until it has cleansed itself of its own blood. With such thoughts as these stirring within him, he sat in the silence, his

soul preparing itself anew for its labors, and his spirit acquiescing in the destiny of the slow, patient toil of years which a forecast of the trials of his life brought before him.



## CHAPTER XIX.

It is related of a famous writer of stories who once upon a time visited a famous philosopher, that after a sparing New England supper he was invited by his host to his study. "Now, my boy," said the sage gravely, "we will have a symposium." Then proceeding to his cupboard, he brought out the remains of a bottle of cooking-sherry, which contained about two small glasses of discolored fluid. These they sipped together as the hours went by. The symposia which Doctor Hogan and David Alexander shared together in their rooms at Mrs. Walworth's, as they sat often at midnight discussing things, were even more abstemious than the celebrated one to which reference has just been made. Their only stimulants were cigars, which the Doctor had taught Alexander how to smoke, and even this was a great indulgence for Alexander, who prided himself upon being an example of industry and frugality—a sort of second Franklin in his own estimation. On the same night that Dr. Hogan had returned enthusiastic from his experiences with Glascock, he sat late with Alexander, talking eagerly of human evolution and a selection of the fittest—subjects suggested to him by Glascock's words. The Doctor's wholesale praise of Glascock produced in Alexander

anything but an amiable frame of mind, and it was in order to maintain his outward self-control that he now brought forth the cigars, and so, smoking and talking, an hour went by before Dr. Hogan thought of his bed.

"If it be true," said Alexander, "that a selection of the fittest is the only method available for race improvement, then I do not see why the law of destruction of the weak and helpless should not be carried out with Spartan firmness."

"In the first place," replied the Doctor, "if that were done, possibly very few of us would escape; and then, granting that it might prove an effectual method, it is revolting to our higher nature."

"Then, as that does not seem practicable, what agencies would you suggest as likely to produce a steady advance in human nature?"

"Glazcock thinks that education is the first great move in the game," replied the Doctor.

"Yet the power of education is distinctly limited, for there is no hereditary transmission of its effects."

"Of course that is true if you speak merely of the education of the individual. And nowhere has this been better illustrated than here in Virginia, where families which for generations had been subjected to culture, are now fallen into hopeless decay because those influences to which they were once subject have been entirely removed."

"I suppose," said Alexander, "that it is a more rational and elevating social system that we need."

"Yes, something like that is the idea; a perfected

system of education extending from generation to generation, and one creating a high-toned public opinion. Then in my mind," added the Doctor, "the higher education of women will play no small part in the future development of humanity."

"In that case," said Alexander, "America will doubtless lead the movement, as there are scarcely in the civilized world, I suppose, any women so determined as ours to secure their freedom." He spoke with some bitterness, thinking of all that Agnes had recently done in an independent way.

"My own pet theory," continued the Doctor, with unusual enthusiasm and interest, "is, that when such social changes shall have taken place, no woman will be compelled, either by hunger, isolation, or social compulsion, to sell herself, whether in or out of wedlock, and that when all women alike shall feel the refining influence of a true humanizing education, the result will be a natural form of human selection which will bring about a continuous advance in the human race." Pausing a few moments the Doctor went on:

"Even now we find many women who never marry because they have never found the man of their ideal. When no woman shall be compelled to marry for a bare living or for a comfortable home, the number of those who remain unmarried from their own choice will certainly increase, while many others, having no inducement to an early marriage, will wait till they meet a man who is really congenial to them." Such views as these did not increase Alexander's amiabil-

ity; he could not avoid the feeling that there was some personal insinuation in what the Doctor said, and he found himself in no mood for sleep when finally the conversation ended and Dr. Hogan repaired to his own room. The Doctor was far too interested in the subjects which his intercourse with Glascock was opening up to him to consider that anything in his talk might affect Alexander personally, so with a serene and clear conscience he went to his bed and slept well; while Alexander, in a fever of resentment against Agnes Carlton in particular and the whole order of things in general, walked the floor of his room the better part of what was left of the night.

The following morning his temper seemed decidedly worse than any one at Mrs. Walworth's had ever seen it; so bad was it that a general gloom settled down upon the breakfast table after he had given one or two sharp replies to some very innocent questions put to him by his fellow boarders. Even Dr. Hogan, when he appeared, felt the effect of something frigid in the room, and rallying those present upon their silence and gloom, got no very satisfactory reply until Alexander had finished his breakfast and left the room. Then Mrs. Walworth said:

"Evidently something has gone wrong with Mr. Alexander. He is in one of his most uncivil moods to-day."

"That explains why all of you look like a lot of naughty children who have been whipped and put in a corner."

"There are times," said Mrs. Walworth, "when

silence is the better part of valor." And that in her opinion there were also times when action was the better part of valor was proven a little later by her calling the maid-of-all-work from the back kitchen to give her some explicit directions.

"Be sure, Sarah Jane," said Mrs. Walworth, "that you clean and fill Mr. Alexander's lamp to-day, then tidy up his room; but don't touch any of his books or papers, or there will be trouble here before sunset." With which wise injunction the landlady took her departure for the market, more determined than ever in her own mind that the pleasure and profit to be derived from boarders with literary proclivities were very doubtful indeed.

Alexander, after leaving Mrs. Walworth's, repaired at once to the Town Library, where there awaited him books of reference which he needed to consult further. Browsing about, first in this alcove then in that, time passed for him, yet the morning's gain was very unsubstantial. Finally, angry with himself as well as with others, he threw aside his books, cast discretion to the winds, and boarding the first available car for Edgewood, appeared there in time for luncheon, a figure much the worse for want of sleep and a composed mind. One of the purposes of Miss Rachel's life had been to maintain at Edgewood an old-fashioned hospitality, ever ready for whatever guest might arrive. David Alexander was the only person whom she had ever been known not to receive cordially. Even when he came upon invitation and she was informed of it beforehand, it took all the available grace

in the old lady's heart for her to treat him civilly. Miss Rachel's original prejudice against him had been that he was his father's son. To this there was added later a prejudice against Alexander himself, his speech, his manner, his mode of thought all being objectionable to her. When, therefore, she discovered that Agnes had been prevailed upon by Alexander's persistency and had promised to become his wife, the old lady's prejudice broke bounds; she did not seek to conceal her feelings from others, or even from Alexander himself. Miss Rachel was ever ready for a tilt with him, and when he presented himself this morning the time was ripe for her anger to burst forth, and burst forth it did in royal fashion at the very first display Alexander made of his own mood.

At luncheon Katherine Webb, who was spending a few days at Edgewood, asked in the most innocent manner:

"I suppose, Mr. Alexander, the season in Plantersville moves on apace and Mamma is as rich and radiant as ever?"

"So far as I can see," replied Alexander with petulance, "everything in Plantersville is running to dregs; everything there is as stale and flat as it is possible to be." Katherine had no opportunity to show what manner of reply hers might have been. Miss Rachel threw herself passionately into the breach.

"I wonder greatly," said the old lady in a tone of extreme sarcasm, "that so splendid and gracious a type of manhood as yourself should not impart a fillip to Plantersville society—especially to that circle in

which move such dull and laggard spirits as that of my friend, Mrs. Webb!"

Alexander saw his error and tried to correct it, saying:

"I meant nothing personal, Miss Rachel; only at times life in the old town does seem to drag terribly." Miss Rachel, however, was not to be appeased.

"It is immaterial what you meant, Mr. Alexander; a rudeness is a rudeness, and the gentlemen of my day and generation were careful not to indulge in such, especially when speaking of their superiors." With this the old lady rose in dignity from the table.

"Agnes," she continued, "you may send my luncheon to my room," and passing out of the door, Miss Rachel left the others present to finish their meal amid a gloom greater than that which had prevailed at Mrs. Walworth's breakfast table.

Agnes, Katherine, and Archibald Gordon saw clearly that Alexander had come to Edgewood so much out of humor that there was nothing to do but maintain a silence so long as they all continued together. Gordon felt decidedly sorry for Alexander, because he knew that Miss Rachel's wrath was not a thing to be incurred thoughtlessly. When the dreary meal was over he and Katherine drew apart, so that when Agnes returned to the library she found herself alone with her irate suitor. With his hands thrust into his trouser's pockets, Alexander commenced walking rapidly up and down the library floor. He seemed to wait for some word from Agnes, but she, having seated herself near a window, was looking out upon the lawn, seem-

ingly unconscious of his presence, though she was, in truth, keenly alive to every detail of the situation, almost to the extent that she could have told afterwards just how many times Alexander passed back and forth through the room before finally pausing in front of her and speaking with suppressed anger.

"You think, no doubt," were his words, "that I made an unlovely exhibition of myself at the luncheon table."

Agnes was determined to be as little personal as possible in her reply, lest she might lose control of her own temper.

"Aunt seemed to think so," was her answer, "and that in this house should settle the question." Her words were but fuel added to the flame already alive in Alexander's breast. Stepping more closely to Agnes he spoke in rapid and angry tones.

"That is just as I might have expected it to be," he said, hurrying on to deliver his overburdened mind. "Everybody here is more considered than I, everybody coming in contact with your life is put before me. I, the man whom you have promised to marry, am compelled to take a back seat, to be a looker-on of the matters with which you fill your days, instead of standing first as I should and being considered above others."

"It has been so," Agnes replied quietly, "because you have so willed it. You have chosen to take no part, no interest in the matters with which I fill my days, as you say."

"And because," he replied, "I disapprove of those



matters, because I see that you are wasting your splendid talents upon things beneath you; and I alone have had the courage to disapprove and hold aloof, while others who seek to win your favor, flatter you with falsehoods and delusions."

"To whom do you refer, please?"

"To your young clergyman friend chiefly," replied Alexander, "whose nonsensical and absurd social ideas seem to have completely captured your imagination and turned your head."

"There you speak falsely and you know it!" said Agnes, white with rage.

"It is as I thought!" said Alexander, bursting into a cynical laugh. "The fellow has captured your heart as well as your head, and so everything explains itself naturally."

"Yes," answered Agnes in a harder tone than any one had ever heard her use before; "everything explains itself naturally. For years I think that the ambition of my life is to write books; yet I am unable to settle to the work, and so drift aimlessly about the world until I meet you. A certain hardness and persistency in your nature I mistake for strength. You persuade me that this quality which I perceive in you is what I need to rest upon before I can accomplish the ambition of my life. In weakness I yield to you. After I have yielded I find myself no more able to do great things than before; in fact, something seems to be sapping all my power. My heart becomes more restless than previously and my mind more at sea. In this state I meet a man who holds up before me, as

he does before others, the ideal of a life of sacrifice—a life filled with loving kindnesses and labor for our fellow men. I find this man is manly and strong beyond all men I have ever known. He illuminates religion, makes of it a new and vital force in life, transforms people and their ideas wherever he goes, makes them see that the common place and every-day things are the ones in which are to be found life's richest and most beautiful rewards. I aim to follow where this man leads, and as I do so I see how poor and unworthy have been all my past ambitions; and when I see this, I know that I can never return and live as I did once. I tell you frankly all that my experience brings me, and I suggest—since our ideas and aims have become so entirely different—that we part. You insist that it cannot be, that I am bound to you by such ties as I have no moral right to break. A second time I yield weakly to you, but with the understanding that I must remain free to follow out my own ideas and to live my own life. You consent, but you give me no sympathy, and as the days go by you withdraw yourself more and more from what constitutes the chief interest of my life, and when you do speak of it to me, it is only in words of condemnation. All this time," she continued after a moment's pause, "I have known in my heart that we were so separated that nothing could ever really bring us together. Still, as you insisted that I had no right to retire from the situation, I strove earnestly to hold myself true and to do as best I could what was demanded of me. The farce is now played out; this is its last act. I continue

on the stage longer only that I may present you with your entire freedom, and in exchange take back what of mine I have rendered into your keeping."

Agnes had continued standing as she spoke; her anger was very great, but it lessened perceptibly as she drew to the end of what she had to say. It was possibly this that made Alexander think he might prevail with her again; for while she had aroused his resentment by the course she had adopted, he had no thought of letting her go. His purpose in coming had been to arrange things to suit himself and to demand of Agnes a speedy marriage. Agnes and Edgewood and all that they represented meant so much to Alexander, that to yield them was for him to expel from his life its dearest portion.

"You are cruel to me!" he said.

"No, not cruel, merely just."

"That is not so," he answered, "for you know very well my chief thought has been for you—to save you, if possible, from the results of your own foolish ventures." Alexander really persuaded himself that he spoke the entire truth. So great was his anxiety to divert Agnes from the course she had followed, that he believed, as he reviewed his own state of mind, that he had thought mainly of her, and only incidentally of himself.

"I will not undertake to disprove your statement," replied Agnes. "So far as I am concerned the matter is now settled for all time. We *must* part. I will say, however," she added, "that your idea of unselfish thought differs materially from mine—your idea

having been to bend me to your will, to shape me according to your own theory of life. It seems to me that had your thought been, as you claim, merely for my good and happiness, you might have made some kind of an effort to help me reach my own ideal; you might have sought in some way to help my development along the line of what I felt to be its highest possibilities."

"You are a delightful idealist," said Alexander, "but you are wanting in all the more practical qualities which success in life demands. My aim has been to supply out of my powers your deficiency and so to assure the future to you."

"You are very kind," said Agnes, unavoidably amused; "but you do not see the most vital point of all, and that is, I no longer care for what you call *success in life*, and were I to aim now mainly for that, I should, according to my own standard, fail altogether."

"But I repeat what I have often said before," insisted Alexander, "that in time, with me as your guide, you will come back to the old ambitions, finding in the end that they alone satisfy."

"But that is just what I do not want to find," replied Agnes with warmth and decision, seeing that nothing else would avail. "I want to keep myself steadily along the path I have found. I do not wish to return to the old ambitions. I care nothing now for the mere writing of books. I want, as the years go by, to give myself more and more to the service of others. Then, possibly," she added, as if the thought came to her for the first time as she forecast

the future, "when I am forty years of age, if my heart is still full of love and my mind ripe with wisdom, I may write a book of some vital importance to human life. That, however," she continued, "is a dream so vague I scarcely discern it. All my interest at present is centered in living, and unless I can do that as I know I should, it little matters, I should think, what I might have said to others."

"Then you will not listen to me?" said Alexander, his anger rising to a higher pitch than it had reached in the first part of their conversation.

"It is not," she replied, "that I *will* not listen to you. It is that I *can* not. You comprehend nothing of my mind and purpose. We cannot continue longer the farce which we have played together. This end had to come; and that it is better so you will readily see as soon as you are able to brush away the cobwebs which have gathered about your mind."

"By your foolishness you will ruin me as well as yourself!" exclaimed Alexander.

"That I do not see," replied Agnes, "since you have still left those ambitions which constitute, in your opinion, the main purpose of life."

"But you were a part of those ambitions," said Alexander, too angry at last to consider that he was making a complete revelation of himself. "And without you and the material benefits which you would have brought me, I doubt my ability to pursue my career."

"Then *that* was your motive!" exclaimed Agnes, as angry as Alexander himself. "I have gone on," she continued, "amid great personal pain, trying to be

true to the obligations you have insisted I was bound by; and all the time you have been thinking of the money and the ease I would bring you."

"Stop!" he cried; "I did not say that."

"Not exactly, but that is what was in your mind, and off guard you have at last given me the truth." It may be that here Agnes was inclined to push her point too far, for when thoroughly aroused, she was apt to sweep aside all half-measures. Such times were seldom in her life, but when they came there was a strange resemblance between her and Miss Rachel, a resemblance never noticed when Agnes was in her normal temper. Then Agnes could indulge in a scorn and sarcasm equal to her aunt's best, which went to prove that the resemblance was not one merely of facial expression.

"Doubtless," continued Agnes, as she moved toward the library door, "you will find others willing to reward your persistency and industry. Literary pursuits are at a premium to-day, and there are innumerable rich spinsters and widows, with time hanging heavily on their hands, who would delight, I feel sure, in a literary lion for a husband. So write your books," she went on relentlessly, "achieve your fame, and you will find the golden fruit drop easily into your outstretched hands."

With these words, certainly not words of Christian charity, such as people should use when taking a final leave of one another, Agnes passed out of the room, and Alexander was left to find his way from Edge-

wood and back to Plantersville as well as his benumbed senses would permit.

Going directly to Miss Rachel's room, Agnes found the old lady there, seated in a high-back rocker, knitting serenely, as if no storm had recently swept over the Edgewood household.

"Aunt," said Agnes, kneeling, as was her habit, before the slender old figure she loved so well, "I have been very foolish."

"Yes, my dear, you have," said Miss Rachel; "but I always believed you would find it out, as you seem now to have done."

"I have sent him away and you will never again be troubled by his presence here."

"In that case, let us put him and all he stood for out of our conversation forever; and out of our minds too, if possible."

"Dear heart!" was all Agnes could say, but she took the peaceful needles out of Miss Rachel's hands and placing those hands upon her own shoulders, encircled the old lady's waist tenderly.

"And my dear," continued Miss Rachel, "hereafter take my advice, which is, if you must get engaged, be sure first you know your man." It was impossible for Agnes not to laugh gently as she replied:

"I am not likely to get engaged again, even provided I know my man. My past experiences have entirely satisfied all my ambitions in that direction. But," she added, "should I be foolish enough to run my head again into a noose, I will try, Aunt, to remember your advice."

“ We shall see what we shall see,” said Miss Rachel, and thus the conversation ended, Miss Rachel returning to her knitting and her thoughts, while Agnes went to find Katherine Webb.



## CHAPTER XX.

IN some seasons the trees fade with very little splendor, but this year the autumn foliage had put on the most brilliant colors. Gordon and Katherine, together with Agnes and the Major, tramped about a great deal across the fields and through the woods, every part of which, it seemed to them, was aglow with an endless variety of beauty. Often the shadows of passing clouds playing over the surface of the autumn landscape, now dimming the tints, now suffering them to flash out in the full light of the sun, added much to the beauty of the scene. On these walks it was a habit with the Major to seek some "coign of vantage" and standing there, enjoying to the fullest the richness of the landscape, he loved to talk with the others of the traditions of the vicinity in which they were, and to draw imaginary pictures of what it must have been when the "forest primeval" covered the land. Many had been the times that the Major in his own heart had envied the Indian his pathless and unbroken wilderness shrouded in the dim and somber gloom of those great forest monarchs, all laid low long ago by the subduing hand of the white man. Often, therefore, with no small degree of indignation did he speak to his companions of the necessities of human civilization,

growing eloquent as he spoke of the gradual falling back of the primitive forest before the constant inroads of ax and saw, first along the valleys and streams, then from the broader plains, and finally from the hills and mountain sides themselves.

"It is strange," said the Major one day, "that our early chronicles and records contain so little information as to our forests."

"It would be interesting," said Gordon, "to know something further than we do about the original forests, and where, if at all, remaining bits of them may yet be found."

"As to marriage, births, and deaths," said the Major, "as well as to boundaries, ownership, and the general topography of the land, much was concisely recorded in the early days. But of those lordly monarchs of the woodlands, indigenous to the soil where they had flourished for generations, we have scarcely a word."

The autumn with its wonderful foliage passed as the summer with all its wealth of growth had done. There was no longer use for either; winter came with its crisp and invigorating air, turning the end of the Major's nose, as he still tramped about, to a cerulean blue, and caressing the cheeks of Katherine Webb till they flushed like the rose of June. Sometimes there was rain and rain for days together; when it ceased, one saw on the sloping garden paths how the gravel had been sifted, and on the Edgewood lawn how the dead leaves and broken twigs had come down in showers. The days grew shorter, and morning and

evening it was colder and colder. So the fires were heaped up, as in olden times, and the long December evenings found Miss Rachel in the library in the biggest and softest armchair there. At this time Agnes had usually a fourth meal served about ten o'clock at night, and after a day of work and an evening at the "Building," she and those with her were glad to adjourn to the dining-room, where, seated at the large round table, a sort of festivity took place, and an unfailing flow of humor and sentiment was kept up for an hour at least. Sometimes Archibald Gordon would recite one of his own poems, sometimes the Major told a story, at other times Agnes talked of the interesting people she knew out in the world, or Katherine Webb sang a song, the latter never failing to bring Miss Rachel from the library, provided she had not been already driven to bed by the winds sweeping around the corners of the house. There were evenings also when Glascock was at Edgewood and took part in the festivity; and then often, as Agnes and her friends lingered at table later than usual, serious discussions took place, in which the affairs of the world were settled with easy certainty—for it must be remembered that Agnes and Glascock and Gordon were comparatively young people, and Katherine was scarcely twenty, and that young people never fear to discuss with airy audacity the most serious questions.

These days, as they glided by, were happy, dreamy days for Katherine Webb, days never to be forgotten, no matter what the future might bring. So far as a purpose in life was concerned, Gordon seemed entirely

restored; his health also had improved more than any one would have thought possible a few months before, when he lay shattered upon Glascock's bed. All the conditions of his life at this time conspired together for a free development of his personality and his genius, so that his charm and his promise had never seemed so great. In fact, during his stay at Edgewood, Gordon touched the high-water mark of his life; he was at his best in everything, and his spirit at times seemed limpid and pure as the brook which runs shining and singing out of the heart of the hills. For once, that ardent, passionate nature of his, with its great capacity for emotion and suffering, seemed to have found a solace, so that he bore himself more like a man inspired by wholesome desires than like one whose hopes had all been blasted. In his youth, had such a life as this present one been possible to Gordon, the liberation of his imagination and the unfolding of his spiritual nature might have been wonderful indeed. Loving beauty as he did, alive to all of its forms as he was, his had been no simple struggle, living ever as he had been forced to live amid disappointment and poverty, and the unlovely conditions which go hand in hand with such a situation.

Of all Gordon's friends Agnes Carlton appreciated most these facts in his life, because hers was a wonderful clarity and range of vision, and also because Emma Gordon had described to her vividly the trials and privations of their family life. Thus fortified with knowledge, Agnes had been able to give Gordon just the kind of sympathy and encouragement he most

needed; and while reserved to the world at large on the subject of himself, Gordon had talked freely to Agnes, allowing her to know the wonderfully tender and sweet side of him which had captivated the heart of Katherine Webb. In regard to Katherine, Gordon continued to be drawn to her through his admiration of her beauty and her sweetness, so that their love seemed complete and their dependence mutual. Thus the current of destiny carried them along, and Gordon was content to float quietly with the tide. When Mrs. Webb discovered how things stood at Edgewood, she felt much as if an unfair advantage had been taken of her, and naturally Agnes came in for a large share of blame.

"I can only say," was Agnes's reply to Mrs. Webb when censured by her, "that I was mistaken in my estimate of Gordon's bodily strength. I believed that he had only a short time to live, and so it seemed cruel to me in the extreme to separate Katherine and himself. But," she added, "seeing how he has regained health and hope, and also seeing how essential he and Katherine are to each other, I do not regret what I have done."

"That is all very fine sentiment, Agnes," said Mrs. Webb, "but if they marry who will pay their bills, I should like to know?"

"Undoubtedly Gordon has genius," answered Agnes, "and I dare hope that he may yet do something great."

"Never! my dear," said Mrs. Webb. "My judgment in such matters does not often err. In my own

life I have been called upon to renounce a good deal and so I have learned many things. Most of us start with the conviction that our heads will strike the stars, and after a little experience we see that they scarcely reach the ceiling."

"But it is better, certainly," said Agnes, "to start with a lofty ideal and to stick to it as long as possible."

"Yes, my dear," said Mrs. Webb, "provided we allow a good margin for shrinkage."

Certain it was that however heavy Mrs. Webb's burdens might be, she had learned to carry them in the easiest way, and had accepted life on that lower level of expectations which Agnes had dreaded so much for herself. It cannot be denied that Mrs. Webb was determined to enjoy the peace that comes from the inevitable, and while at times she scolded Katherine, and in silence pronounced anathemas upon the state of affairs brought about as she considered by impracticable, irresponsible heads, she went on living her own life as comfortably and happily as she alone knew how to do. Of course Mrs. Webb was not heroic in the fashion which Agnes and Katherine admired. But as that lady said, she had been called upon to renounce a good deal, and so had acquired the wisdom of accepting things; this made her accomplish gracefully her journey through life, which after all may be a larger wisdom than that which permits the soul to be tempest-tossed all its days.

The complications of the situation brought no one greater annoyance than Miss Rachel. Mrs. Webb refused to come to Edgewood while Archibald Gordon

remained there, and to be deprived of Mrs. Webb's society for so long a time was a serious matter to Miss Rachel. Unavoidably Miss Rachel had become interested in the things done and talked of at the present time at Edgewood; but she had great need of a friend with whom to discuss, from her own point of view, the general tone and spirit and atmosphere of these things. Never before had Miss Rachel perceived so clearly that the silvery mists of age had gathered about her mental vision. As she saw Katherine and Archibald Gordon together, looking into each other's eyes as if all the mystery and beauty of life were reflected there, she understood how that bright, dancing glow which once shed for her too a radiance over everything had faded away. Then when she turned to Agnes all eagerness for her work, giving her days and nights to it, and pushing aside the personal pain which Miss Rachel could readily see was in her heart, new and strange impressions came to the old lady. Never before had she been called upon to consider the power of the individual to create the atmosphere surrounding a whole community; and it was astounding to her beyond words that the importance of one life should be so great as to carry within itself the power to save or destroy. Reared in the old-fashioned school, Miss Rachel had not been accustomed to associate these things with woman; naturally, all her former ideas of values seemed disarranged. A quite new individual differentiation took place in her mind; she felt keenly the need of discussing matters with so clear-headed a person as Mrs. Webb. With the advent of Christmas,

when ivy and holly commenced to make their appearance in the house, Miss Rachel refused to be longer a victim of circumstance. Her decree went forth: Mrs. Webb must be brought to Edgewood for Christmas day; otherwise Miss Rachel was determined to break through the rule of a lifetime and spend the day away from her home! Agnes must arrange the matter; how, was immaterial to Miss Rachel, only it must be arranged, even if Katherine Webb and Archibald Gordon had to be sent away!

But Archibald and Katherine were not sent away, for Agnes proved herself anew the most skilful of diplomats. After arguing her point in masterly fashion, and explaining to Mrs. Webb frankly the dilemma in which Miss Rachel's peremptory demand had placed her, Mrs. Webb waived her objections, and Christmas morning found both Mrs. Webb and Dr. Hogan, together with Miss Rachel and the Major, drinking their egg-nog from the famous Edgewood punch-bowl. And so over all peace and joy settled for the time being.

For a week or more before Christmas Day Agnes had been busy making plans for its celebration at the "Building." She was anxious that the people who gathered there at this time should gain a fresh impression of the spiritual significance of the season; yet she wished this to be so without the formality of any religious ceremony; for Agnes's faith was one of direct perception, and she sought always to avoid the tangle of theology. The boys were to have their game of ball on the playground, and later everybody was to



have a good dinner ; but first of all those who assembled for the celebration were asked to meet together in the room set apart for talks and lectures. When Agnes arrived there she found a goodly number of her country friends awaiting her, and she threw herself with enthusiasm into the task she had set herself. Katherine Webb had brought her violin, upon which she rendered some Christmas melodies, then Agnes stood up and talked very simply, but earnestly, of why Christmas is a time of celebration.

“Thanksgiving Day,” said Agnes, “celebrates the God of nature, who gives us all things richly to enjoy ; Christmas the God-made Man, who for us men and women came down to earth and was called the Christ, and showed us what the human life of God could be. Then we have Easter later on, celebrating the risen Christ, and so all these times have their sacred significance. Thus we see that the message of the Christmas bells, the meaning of the Christmas music, the inspiration of the gift-giving at this time, and the source of all merry-making is this : that those who call themselves Christians believe that the birth of Christ was the coming of the Son of God and the gift of a new and divine life to the children of men.” When Agnes had finished her modest talk, Gordon read to them from Tom Page’s “In Old Virginia” ; after which silence fell upon the little band ; but ultimately the social instinct prevailed and a good deal of innocent merry-making was enjoyed by old and young, besides a royally good dinner which Agnes and Katherine served mainly with their own hands.

It was a cause of grief to Agnes that Glascock could not spend his Christmas Day at Edgewood, but this was impossible, as he had his morning service and sermon at St. Stephen's; and in the afternoon he and Miss Jane Summers conducted at the rectory a social function somewhat similar to that which Agnes had held in the morning at Edgewood. Thus, firm in the belief that the glory of love is self-sacrifice, Agnes and Glascock, each in the place where a definite purpose demanded the devotion of mind and energy, passed a day filled with a sacred and solemn pleasure. When all was over, and the Edgewood house restored to its usual quiet, Agnes presented a dejected figure, as alone, late at night, she sat in the library, looking intently into the glowing embers of the open fire. She had given herself unreservedly to her friends and to the work of her choice, and yet she could not be honest with her own soul and deny that she did not feel terribly alone and in need of something closer and more personal than the things with which she was striving to content herself. Unalterably her interest and enthusiasm were caught up in the great movements of modern life, but her spirit could not find rest, because there was in her the unconquerable need of love as a harmonizer. The deep heart of the woman in Agnes Carlton cried out above everything, and unless at some time, somewhere, there could be given to it an adequate and satisfying response, she must, she knew, learn to accept for all time the twilight. Long did she sit alone, gazing into the glowing embers, and questioning her own soul, and the answers that came

back to her were always the same. Renunciation was good, at times was holy and necessary; but where the living light had adequately penetrated she felt sure there could not exist a love which asks for death. In such a place there would be no room for those somber, blind and pitiless duties which impel mankind to self-effacement and entire abnegation. On this point her mind cleared wonderfully. As she gazed more and more intently into the burning logs, the more crystalized became her thoughts and convictions. While not doubting that trial and denial are often truer refiners of character than pleasure, she felt that the soul should not embrace unnecessary trial and denial; its aim should be to find the way which opens it to the utmost good and gives to it the power of interpreting for the benefit of others its own experience. As this light broke about her spirit a wave of infinite and irrepressible tenderness swept over her; her empty arms stretched themselves forth passionately; and there rushed into her heart an eagerness to reach Glascock in some way and tell him the truth as it had been revealed to her. Yet when the vision was past and she had mounted the stairs to her own room, she knew that she should go on as she had begun, still renouncing her love and striving to content herself with the life she was leading.

Unable to sleep, Agnes found her way later to Katherine's room and to her surprise found the girl in slippers and dressing-gown sitting before her own fire, staring into it much as Agnes had done when in the library.

"My dear," said Agnes, "this is very fascinating, but not, I fear, conducive at this hour to beauty." As she spoke, Agnes drew close to Katherine, and kneeling beside her, as she often did when with Miss Rachel, rested against the girl's knee.

"I have been so happy to-day," said Katherine, "that it was impossible to end it all by going to sleep." She looked very beautiful in the glow from the open fire. With intense delight Agnes gazed for a moment upon the girlish figure before her; then realizing the significance of what Katherine had said and trembling lest this might be her day of greatest joy, she folded the girl lovingly in her arms, kissing her again and again upon the lips.

"Katherine," said Agnes, "all my life I have been *trying* things, seeking in them the key to the universe, and all my life I have failed; while you, in your youth, have found it in this love of yours—pure and spotless and undefiled as the robes of the angels in Paradise."

"But, O Agnes!" replied Katherine, whose arms were now about Agnes, "*you* are unhappy. What is it? Will you not tell me?" pleaded the girl.

"At times, Katherine, there are things in our lives of which we cannot speak, things deeper in us than we ourselves realize at first. And at such times the cries of an unsatisfied heart become so loud that we forget our blessings, and feel that all life is blank and void, that everything is a failure."

"But you who do so much for others, could never feel that," protested Katherine.

"Yes, my dear, I feel it to-night and that is why I

cannot sleep. But it is unworthy in me," she added quickly, "and by to-morrow, I trust the feeling may be gone."

"You want some one to love," said Katherine, "just as I love Archibald Gordon."

"Yes," replied Agnes, "that possibly is it; and I have been trying to persuade myself that I am strong enough to stand alone."

Katherine placed her hands tenderly about Agnes's face, looking with love and intensity into the woman's beautiful azure-gray eyes.

"Agnes," said the girl, "I am much younger than you; and Mamma and Miss Rachel think me a great fool. But listen to me, and don't try to get through all alone, for as the Major said the other day, it will be a waste of the finest woman's heart any of us have ever known."

"Dear old Major!" said Agnes. "What should I have done all these years without him, so good, so loyal and so tender to me?"

"And Agnes," said Katherine, growing bold now that Agnes seemed willing to talk with her, "the Major's dearest wish, his heart's desire, is to see you married to our friend, William Glascock."

"Hush! we must not talk of that. And you and the Major must not even think of it." And kissing Katherine again quickly, Agnes went away to her own room, her hands clasped firmly over her heart lest its rapid beating should prostrate her and so render her unfit to meet the coming day with the duties that were to fill it.

When left alone, Katherine sat for a long time before the fire. Agnes's words had banished from the girl's heart her own intense happiness and filled it with apprehensions. Next to Gordon no one was so dear to her as Agnes, and with the earnestness and eagerness of youth, she thought of many ways by which she might help the woman whom she loved. But none of the ways which presented themselves were likely to avail, for circumstances were preparing themselves far beyond the ken of Katherine or Agnes, which in the fulness of time were to work out God's will in their lives, and so it mattered little what Katherine in her girlish wisdom tried to bring to pass.

## CHAPTER XXI.

WHILE Archibald Gordon's life at Edgewood had restored his body and soothed his spirit beyond all expectation, he experienced a certain intense pleasure in his return to Plantersville. The habitués of the old library had greatly missed his daily presence among them, as he at times had missed the habit of being there; so his reappearance in his customary resort brought pleasure to others as well as to himself. How intimately the old place and its associations were interwoven with his dreams and aspirations he had scarcely realized until he came back after his long absence and took up the life there that time and habit had made most naturally his. In a few days he was, as formerly, to be found at the old library the greater part of the twenty-four hours, and there at a favorite table, recognized by all as rightfully his, he commenced anew that struggle for success with his pen. At first it was difficult to shape and express in any definite form the thoughts and emotions born of his recent experiences; but after a little he found these more and more under the control of his will; and then his work began in deadly earnest, seeming to promise great things. Every one observed the enthusiasm and energy which he brought at this time to his daily task, and it became

whispered about that this was the transformation of love; people who had despaired of him began to believe in him again, and faith and hope sprang up about him on all sides. And Gordon, satisfied that love is the chief possession within the imagination and that its power to save and recreate is wonderful beyond all words, began anew to agonize and strive with the world and his own soul, while Katherine Webb looked on, like a guardian angel, welcoming hardship, and isolation if need be, as her portion of the struggle.

At this time another heart besides Katherine's was charged with great hope, and that was Emma Gordon's. With the pardonable and ever beautiful optimism of love, Emma, dazzled by her brother's new-found happiness, persuaded herself easily that at last it was the merest question of time when he would have the world at his feet. One has to make his way slowly and arduously, she argued; it has ever been so with the masters in every department of labor; she doubted not that the years of adversity through which they had passed would bear a rich and abundant fruit. Since no arguments can purge human hearts of their secret dreams it was well that Emma Gordon, shut within her invalid life, should find solace and delight in seeing the brother whom she loved so well placed at last, by virtue of his own genius, in high sunlit places. So it came about that a bond of hope as well as affection bound Katherine and the invalid girl to one another, and often they sat together and talked of the future, a future rich and beautiful as their imaginations pictured it. How easily youth and inexperience find a



golden haze cast over the distant horizon! Little do they know of the steep, gray defile up which men who succeed must toil! But Mrs. Webb, who knew life well from the practical side, understood much of that steep, gray defile, and often at this time, as from day to day she watched Katherine, did she feel the wisdom of that philosophy which forgets life's perspective and sees it only as a flat surface of immediate duty.

"Better no ideals than rude awakenings," said Mrs. Webb one day to Miss Rachel, as they sat talking of their young people.

"Yes," replied Miss Rachel, "for blighted hopes are as hard to bear as the loss of friends, and withered hearts as hard to live with as empty homes."

The weeks went by and Gordon continued ever at his work; but that buoyancy which he had brought with him from Edgewood could not, in the natural course of things, last. He had always experienced seasons of hope and despondency, and it was not long before his real temperament prevailed, so that his work was done each day with increasing effort. Still, he stuck bravely to it, doing his best upon it; but there began to be times when not even Katherine could lighten his burden and make him hope as he had done during the first days of his return. If Katherine saw these things, she remained silent, and bore as brave a part as any young woman possibly could. Gordon, too, bore as brave a part as was possible to him, for he strove manfully to hide from Katherine the despondency which would come over him at times; but he did not strive to banish these times entirely from

his life. This was beyond him, and no love, mighty to save and recreate as he had believed it, could make him strong enough to put forth any such effort. Soon after his return to Plantersville Gordon resumed his visits to Glascock, and their walks together, especially in the evening, were taken up again. Glascock came to understand better than any one the manifold struggles which experience was bringing to Gordon, and it was not long before he commenced to doubt Gordon's ability to maintain to a successful end his present attitude toward his work. Young enough in years Gordon certainly was, but too gray in heart, Glascock feared, to buffet with the mountain tempests which blow on more lofty situations. With such apprehensions growing in his mind, Glascock besought Gordon to give up the kind of literary work he was attempting and to obtain, through the influence of his friends, some regular editorial position, with a fixed salary attached thereto. Knowing well that he was unfit by temperament for such a place, Gordon refused at first to listen to Glascock's proposition; but as each passing day brought more and more a discouragingly small practical result, he was finally driven to consider Glascock's plan. Unless he was willing to give up Katherine Webb, Gordon knew that he must, as never before, face the necessity of earning money. The longer he worked independently and reviewed the situation from a financial point of view, the more it seemed to him that he was trusting to a broken reed. Had his been the faculty for making popular fiction, everything might have been different. His gift was

a purely literary one, and the exercise of it under the most favorable conditions was not likely to bring any rich material reward. But since all the gates in the literary world have become thronged with suitors, there is fierce competition on every hand. Gordon was forced to admit that a man of no greater physical strength than his had scarcely a chance of fighting his way through, while using his pen merely as a free lance. It was therefore decided, after much serious consultation between Glascock and Gordon, that the latter could not do better than assume certain editorial duties in connection with the Plantersville "Times"—duties made possible to him by the intervention of Glascock and others influential in high places.

When Mrs. Webb heard that Archibald Gordon had taken such a very sensible and practical step as to associate himself with a respectable daily paper, she commenced to think for the first time that, after all, she might be mistaken in her forecastings of the future. If so, she resolved frankly to admit her error of judgment and to congratulate Katherine upon the possession of a keener insight than her own. However, with her usual wisdom, Mrs. Webb kept silent for the time being, deeming some substantial sign of success necessary before making a declaration of her policy. Agnes and Katherine, as well as Gordon's other friends, felt, like Mrs. Webb, that he had taken a wise step; he heard himself applauded on all sides and great things prophesied of his future. Emma Gordon alone understood what a surrender of his liberty meant to her brother, and how difficult, to one of

his desultory, irregular habits, would be work prescribed by another. Those high hopes and dreams which the invalid girl had shared with Katherine grew dim before the possibility of Gordon's falling anew into a state of callousness or recklessness. Well she knew should this befall after all that had passed, there would be nothing left but plunge after plunge into degradation. Still, the step had been taken, and Emma, loving Archibald with an infinite tenderness, offered him all the encouragement she could, trying to inspire him with some of that heroic quality so abundant in her own strong, patient soul.

Great as had been Gordon's dislike of school-teaching, that dislike paled into insignificance before the horror with which his new life filled him. He could sit for days at a time in the old library, with only the shortest intervals of recreation, reading, writing and thinking, and that did not harass his spirit because he did it of his own free will and choice. But to be driven to write for space, while the printers waited upon the selection of his words or the polishing of his sentences, was what his spirit, born to be free and to feed itself upon beauty, could not brook. Even the reward of Katherine's love could not make him take pleasure in this work or accept it with grace. Yet for two months he kept steadily at the task he had assumed, and did it so well and said so little about the terrible darkness in his own soul, that no one, not even Emma, suspected what his constancy cost him. It was evident, though, to all, that Gordon's health went down greatly under the strain imposed by his editorial

work, and the expression of his face showed that his emotions were playing sad havoc with his strength. When appealed to not to make such demands upon himself, Gordon replied that everything would be better with him as soon as he had broken himself in and accustomed himself to routine work. So confidently did he speak that all were deceived into believing things would, in time, be as he said. But himself he did not deceive. He knew that with him the inner as well as the outer man was disordered and hampered; like Katherine's violin when the strings were not properly tuned, his life was producing only discord. He knew also that this discord increased rather than diminished, as time passed; and that life and everything it represented were fast becoming less and less sweet, and more and more of a trial and a burden. Sometimes when he looked into Katherine's eyes, and saw there such love and trust as few men ever see anywhere in the world, he felt that it would have been better had he never been born; for wonderful as he knew that love to be and rich as it had made him, it could not change his nature so that he could go contentedly in harness.

Possibly there was a fiber of madness in Gordon's composition, for certainly there were times when he was morbid beyond anything that real life and sunny humanity encompass. At such times he seemed to dwell in a region of spectral phantasms; he loved to walk alone in shaded and remote spots, and to meditate for hours upon misery and decay. One afternoon, about two months after assuming his newspaper

work, he fell into one of his most morbid moods, and with the desire of cooling the feverishness of mind and body, he went away from the office at just the hour that the work of the day commenced to press. After walking about in various directions for a while, he bent his footsteps in the direction of that open space below the town, where so often he had sat and listened to the roar of the river—a sound that expressed for him thoughts and emotions which he could never put into words. He remained in his accustomed place until it was quite dark, when the moon rose and shed a quiet light upon him and the old river. In the spot where he sat he could not hear, after the darkness fell, a single human sound; the moon went on rising higher and higher, and clear, innocent stars came out here and there, and looked down upon him. Sitting thus he reviewed his whole life. The history of it, it seemed to him, could be recorded in the words: desire and fear, sadness and care. This record, he felt, could never be changed. In some lives there come, after years of strife, a sense of rest, a consciousness of peace; but he was never to know a real state of harmony, in which life might go on without tension, without tumult. Never was he to be a master of his own soul, never was he to feel himself a sensible atom of the divine, a part of the universal life which is of God. However great may have been to him the charm of emotion in the past, he felt no longer any special interest in it, and that devouring and incessant activity which we call life itself seemed to him all a vulgar struggle for power and greed. Then why so much

effort and noise, when it is all a mere stunning and deafening of the self? If death should come to him, he knew he should recognize this as true; then why not, he asked himself, admit it at the present time and be done with the whole thing? In the old world, Gordon remembered, there had been a set of philosophers who looked life in the face and set their teeth together in defiance. The Stoics bade destiny do its worst. To them it was a hateful thing to be born, and the only good came when they fell into their last sleep. Other philosophers concluded to laugh at human experience. Life for them was a sarcasm, a bit of ridicule, a painful farce. No matter what came, they shrugged their shoulders, lifted their eyebrows, and tried to think the universe a practical joke. Why, with these, could not he come to some kind of terms with fate, or if not, why should he not admit at once that he was a servile, dogged and bitter slave, soured by the experience of life, one whom love, even in its most beautiful and tender form, had been unable to sweeten and mellow and ripen?

There is no richer soil for sins against one's self than such a mood of discouragement as Gordon experienced that afternoon. It is in such times of depression that men and women, even those of sound, good instincts, fall before temptation. Depression, it has been said, is the devil's opportunity; the mood of discouragement is his ripest moment for mischief. Certainly this seemed true in Gordon's case, for when he returned to his neglected work later in the evening, he placed a bottle of brandy on his desk, within easy

reach of his right hand. The next day he was not in his place; nor the next; and so the days went by, and the glory of a pure love for Katherine Webb died, for having outraged it in his life, Gordon had pulled down about himself the very pillars of his soul.

One evening early in the spring, Gordon found himself quite alone in the old library. The lights had been extinguished, the place was closed for the night, and just how he happened to be there he could not explain to himself; nor did he know that it was spring, for he had of late kept not even a rude account of the days. He had crept in here just before the hour of closing and, hidden away in one of the alcoves familiar to him, had fallen asleep and been left there without any one's knowledge. When he awoke a strange voice seemed whispering in his heart and the place seemed insufferably hot. He tottered to a window and opened it. The night was very still. The Square surrounding the library looked soft and beautiful in the dim lights which fell upon it, while its tall oaks, moving gently in the night air, might have passed for waves of the sea. Slowly the full moon rose and flamed above the horizon. Gordon watched the scene, and still that strange voice seemed whispering in his heart. He had a strange idea, too, of an angel with a fiery sword standing beside him. As the cool air blew upon his wasted cheeks and cleared his puzzled brain, this angel with the fiery sword took the form of Katherine Webb. Then he could endure it no longer. All the slow agony of the past few weeks seemed concentrated in a moment, and with a rush



what was left of his soul went down into the black waters of a bitterness worse than death. He dropped on his knees and a cry of anguish broke from him: "Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man!" This cry was the end of earth's passions for Archibald Gordon. Though the life of the flesh might persist, he knew that his spirit would die of a languishing disease, and that if he lived on in the future it would be as one in a tomb, seeing only its four dark walls, and hearing but dimly the murmur of the living world outside. Nothing of bloom or of song would ever penetrate to the darkness and stillness of that tomb which he himself had sealed about him. Fumbling in his pockets, Gordon found there a small bottle, and holding this between himself and the moon, with trembling hands he measured out a portion of morphine, sufficient to prevent for all time any repetition of such an extreme of anguish as he had just suffered. In the dusk of earliest dawn Gordon lay dead upon the floor of the place he had loved so well, while his outstretched arms closed in a last embrace several of those mighty volumes he had been wont to pour over, and which, in his fall, he had dragged down with him. Thus they found him: and only those who loved him understood how it was that a human heart rich in so many beautiful attributes had beat itself out against what had seemed to it the stony injustice of destiny.

No one was more deeply moved by Gordon's end than William Glascock; indeed he seemed to take Gordon's death so much as a personal matter that many people thought it strange. Glascock had come to love

Gordon with a peculiar tenderness; but besides this Gordon was associated in Glascock's mind with Agnes Carlton, and this made the ties that had bound the two men together closer and dearer. Moreover, having been for months Gordon's chief confidant and adviser, Glascock felt that he was in some very personal way responsible for his end. It seemed to him that he had missed the mark in advising him, though knowing all the while that his one aim had been to lead erring footsteps in the right path. Still, as he reflected upon the events in Gordon's life since they had been friends, Glascock could but feel that he ought to have understood the other man's nature better than to have urged upon him such a course as his spirit could never accept and endure. As these thoughts pressed upon him, Glascock's heart was heavy indeed, and a sense of failure, of mistaken purpose in regard to many things rested upon him.

Gordon was laid to rest on a hillside overlooking Plantersville, the river, which he had loved so well, sweeping past his grave with the freshness and purity of the mountains in its bosom. As Glascock stood looking at the spot where at last Gordon's poor much-abused body rested in peace, he felt that he was beginning to gain a new view of nature and a new conception of life. Undoubtedly, he had aimed freely to give men affection, sympathy, interest and cooperation. Was it possible, he began to ask himself, that in aiming to hold himself ready at all times to do this, he was developing in himself a certain stiffness of mind which might in time impair the strength of his

affections and the freshness of his imagination? Was it that he was beginning to think more of consistency than of truth? Always had he wished to be free and open, ready to mind the least change in his spirit. Could it be that he had shut himself so within himself, had thought so much of service to others, that he was allowing his life to conform to a creed cut and measured for him, and thereby missing the highest development of his own soul? God is life, not death. He is to be found in that career which produces the fullest, broadest, most sympathetic man, and not among the tombs, as the legion-haunted tried to find him. This being so, Glascock asked himself earnestly again and again, what it really meant to live for God and with God? What course in his case would bring the most beautiful and the most blessed life? There had gone up from Katherine Webb, when Glascock went to her and told her of Gordon's end, such a cry of anguish as had penetrated the deepest recesses of his own heart. Since then human affection and human ties had appeared to him in a different light than formerly. Of all the things committed by God to man, nothing now seemed to him so sacred as that deeper human love which touches and sets vibrating all those chords which are the sweetest and holiest in a man's soul. In the past he had sought to silence these chords, for he had honestly believed that to do so was demanded of him. Which was normal and right—that former view, the result of a life's thought and training, or his present view, which seemed to have come to him as a special and direct revelation? As the days went by intently did Glascock watch Agnes Carlton. A strange

light came into his eyes as he looked upon her ministering to Katherine. The more he watched her all-embracing devotion and tenderness, the more it seemed to him that God would have a right to strike him down and sweep him from the face of the earth as one unworthy to do his work in the world, should a hair of Agnes's head come to grief through him. For days he went about as one in a dream, performing his duties in the most perfunctory manner, and crying constantly to God for an answer to those questions which so beset and perplexed him. At last, finding that no answer came, he determined to go away for a while, seeing what light would come to him from a new environment. One evening in the early spring he slipped quietly out of Plantersville; but not before he had been to Emma Gordon and her mother, telling them that in the future they were to look to him for support and comfort. Agnes had forestalled him there; but seeing that his very heart was set upon this plan, Emma remained silent about Agnes, so he went away not knowing that Agnes and he had both assumed voluntarily those duties which poor Gordon had trampled in the dust. But Agnes was not left in the dark, for Emma Gordon told her all, and thus a new bond seemed to bind Agnes and Glascock together. That he had gone away to get clearer views of truth and duty and renew his strength Agnes did not know; her own life moved on as before, with the exception that Katherine Webb came to live at Edgewood, and that the old place was never to know again the charming presence and winning manner of Archibald Gordon.

## CHAPTER XXII.

AGAIN it was June, and from the grounds at Edgewood the flush of life might readily be seen "thrilling back over hills and valleys." The spring had been late, and now in a sudden outburst of summer warmth all the glories of leafage and bloom had come out together. The elms, the hawthorns and the laburnums were rivaling one another in beauty and brilliance, while the garden was resplendent in brightness of hue and freshness of verdure.

"I have known it before, but this morning I am convinced anew," said Agnes to Katherine as they went strolling about together, "that there is no more glorious spot in all Virginia, than here, among the fields and meadows of Edgewood." As Agnes spoke there came to her the realization that the liberation of her own imagination and the unfolding of her spiritual nature had been gained principally in the woods and fields; these had been her most potent teachers, developing in her that clarity and range of vision so keenly alive to all the beauty of the great world of earth and sky. But to Katherine Webb Agnes's words made slight appeal; the beauty of flower or tree or landscape was lost for her in her own melancholy

thoughts of a grave on the hillside near Plantersville, the river sweeping past it with the freshness and purity of the mountains in its bosom. But Katherine was young and the most of life lay yet before her, and so when Agnes looked upon the girl's melancholy countenance she tried to apply wisdom to a reading of her future. In this Agnes was right, for such is the elasticity of our human nature, that when our ships go down in a sea of trouble, carrying with them the hopes and plans of a lifetime, we yet proceed after the first feelings of despair have passed, to reconstruct our lives on the new lines laid down by fate. Still, Katherine could not just now be expected to experience any new interests or make any fresh ventures after happiness, and Agnes felt no surprise when, after some moments of silence, the girl replied:

"Everything might be beautiful if only one could forget that suffering is the common lot of all."

"But the suffering of which you speak is after all the mainspring of the universe; and instead of being an impediment to progress, as it appears at first, it is really its cause."

"But I shudder," said Katherine, "when I think that every step in the ladder by which man has climbed is stained with blood, and that the birds and the butterflies are not even the joyous things the poets think them, but like every other living creature are engaged in a terrible struggle for existence."

Agnes drew Katherine very close to her. The girl was much paler and slenderer than some months before, and it was very evident from her appearance and

words that her experience of life had deepened her power of suffering and of thought.

"I feel sure," said Agnes, speaking slowly and tenderly, "that our pessimism would give place to a rich optimism if we could but always see that the rod of affliction is but the modeling tool by which God creates all living things."

"Ah, if it could only be different!" cried Katherine. "If there could only be no need of suffering in the world!"

"It is said that there was such a time once," replied Agnes. "But that was when there was no life; when the earth was void and without form, and when darkness was upon the face of the deep."

"So with life came suffering, I suppose."

"Yes, increasing as the forms of life increased. And mysterious as may be the reason, there is no doubt about the result. Benefits certainly arise from afflictions, good comes out of what is seeming evil, and life from death."

Together the two women walked on, across the quiet fields, on every side fathomless depths of greenness and enchanting beauty. The stir and turmoil of the outside world seemed so distant and alien that Agnes found herself wondering if they might not be the dreams of a disordered mind. The fields about Edgewood were no more wonderful than other green fields at this time of the year, yet to Agnes they were touched with sublimity; in the distance the cattle were browsing on their grassy slopes, yet infinity and eternity seemed somehow embodied in them. The whole

scene was both familiar and mysterious. This country so well known to her, in which she had been born and bred, was enfolded in an atmosphere which brought with it all the magic of light and shade, all the mystery of shadow and distance, and the co-mingling of earth and sky. The last few weeks had seen a great development wrought in Agnes, the rich unfolding of her higher nature having gone forward by leaps and bounds. What she had borne for Katherine Webb during these weeks was the one thing needed fully to unfold all the tenderness and sweetness of her own nature, so that at last the whole world was rich in spiritual suggestiveness. Wonderfully quiet and patient had Agnes been, laying aside all thought of self, and serving in the most gentle way those about her. Now had come her reward. Her spirit, so long in doubt, burdened so often with that misery and suffering of which Katherine spoke, had risen to the point of a calm contemplation of the difficulties of life without feeling that the mystery is unsolvable. She knew at last that in her case the best things were to conquer; that in her own life she was to find a way of making the ideal and the actual harmonize. All somber thoughts had passed away from her, and she stood forth in the fresh morning, finding the world thrillingly beautiful, knowing that her own spirit was alive and capable of growth, whatever the past years and the failure of other lives may have seemed to say.

In such a mood as this Glascock found her, amid the setting of green fields and meadows, the air full of the perfume of roses, and all the delights of early sum-



mer filling the senses. As he came forward to greet her, it seemed to him as if he were going down into an enchanted garden which all the years of his life had lain hidden behind great snowy walls, and that for the first time he saw all the hedges in flower, the butterflies dancing, the insects humming and the birds singing. As he and Agnes looked into each other's eyes everything was told that there was to tell. Both had fought their fight as honestly and bravely as sincere, earnest souls can. Both had been willing to accept God's decree, whether it should be to dwell alone in the mountain where there is snow and ice and winter and silence, or below on the shining plains, where there is sunshine and life and joy and love.

"Until to-day I had felt it my duty to help you keep silent," she said when the day had passed and she and Glascock sat together in the quietness of the unclouded summer night.

"And until a few days ago," he replied, "I had believed it mine to remain silent."

"And then?" she asked.

"Then," he answered, "a new world unfolded itself to me—a wonderful world blended together of light and color and spiritual splendor. And under its spell I saw God's truths anew, and the last remnant of my old self seemed to break away from me, until I stood forth a new and changed man. Truly I can say," he continued, "that I have never thought of or sought personal gratification in my own life, but once I confounded this with personal happiness. I have come, however, to see that there is a happiness high

and holy, open even to those who think that they have done with hope, which comes to men and women as a direct gift or command from God. When human affection comes in this way we have no right to close our hearts against it; and when it does so come it has the power to do us the highest good, assisting us to escape from the manifold forms of selfishness and to look at duty with fresh impulse."

"Then you think," asked Agnes eagerly, "that devotion to me will not lessen your devotion to duty or divert you from your work?"

"Did I not render to you," replied Glascock, "that devotion which has grown in my heart, I should stifle the holiest emotion God has ever given me, and so should unfit myself for duty and work. Had I never loved you all might have remained as it was—I continuing to feel the obligation of a separate life resting upon me. It is the love and the quality of it which makes the difference."

"Then you are satisfied?" asked Agnes, her hand touching his for the first time in the clasp of affection.

"It is better than that," he said. "I am blessed, for I have one to walk with me who I know will ever help me to be more and more a man according to the divine idea; a man whose chief privilege it is to minister to others, to be a servant and follower of Him who 'came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.'"

Thus, they sat together, the clear starry sky above them, and, having solved in silence the deeper mysteries of their own hearts, they spoke reverently to one

another of their most searching and individual experiences, pledging themselves to a devotion which should find its utterance largely in practical service to others. Thus fate fought on the side of Miss Rachel and Mrs. Webb, and the Major's wisdom was justified and his dreams made real, for out of the past arose an angel with healing in his white and lustrous wings; and all was not lost in the sands.















NOV 29 1947

NX 001 007 746

B31-14D



